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and

Nehemiah

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THE BOOKS OF

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EZRA AND NEHEMIAH

WITH INTRODUCTION, NOTES AND MAPS

BY

HERBERT EDWARD RYLE, D.D.
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STEREOTYPED EDITION.

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PREFACE
BY THE GENERAL EDITOR.

THE General Editor of *The Cambridge Bible for Schools* thinks it right to say that he does not hold himself responsible either for the interpretation of particular passages which the Editors of the several Books have adopted, or for any opinion on points of doctrine that they may have expressed. In the New Testament more especially questions arise of the deepest theological import, on which the ablest and most conscientious interpreters have differed and always will differ. His aim has been in all such cases to leave each Contributor to the unfettered exercise of his own judgment, only taking care that mere controversy should as far as possible be avoided. He has contented himself chiefly with a careful revision of the notes, with pointing out omissions, with

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suggesting occasionally a reconsideration of some question, or a fuller treatment of difficult passages, and the like.

Beyond this he has not attempted to interfere, feeling it better that each Commentary should have its own individual character, and being convinced that freshness and variety of treatment are more than a compensation for any lack of uniformity in the Series.

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*** The Text adopted in this Edition is that of Dr Scrivener's *Cambridge Paragraph Bible*. A few variations from the ordinary Text, chiefly in the spelling of certain words, and in the use of italics, will be noticed. For the principles adopted by Dr Scrivener as regards the printing of the Text see his Introduction to the *Paragraph Bible*, published by the Cambridge University Press.

INTRODUCTION.

§ 1. *Ezra and Nehemiah: originally one work.*

EZRA and Nehemiah are not, as the English reader is apt to suppose, two distinct books, but the two portions into which a single work has been divided. It has been due to what might almost be called a literary accident that the two portions are not even now known as the First and Second Books of Ezra. If the use of that ancient appellation had been retained in the English Bible, the relation between the two portions of the work would more generally have been seen to be the same as that which subsists between the two Books of Samuel, between the two Books of Kings, and between the two Books of Chronicles.

The original unity of the two books appears indeed from a close examination of their contents and structure; and to this it will be necessary to refer later on. But, apart from the internal evidence, the testimony of antiquity is practically conclusive upon the subject. For it leaves us in no sort of doubt that, in the *Hebrew* Canon of Scripture, our books of Ezra and Nehemiah ranked from the first as one book bearing the title of Ezra.

(*a*) When Josephus speaks of the Jewish Scriptures as twenty-two books in all, and as containing the Pentateuch, thirteen historical books, and four books of poetry and moral

maxims, it is generally admitted that he reckons Ezra-Nehemiah as *one* of the historical works[1].

(*b*) When, again, Melito, Bishop of Sardis, writing about 180 A.D., enumerates the twenty-two books of the Hebrew Scriptures according to a list which he has obtained from Jewish sources in Syria, he mentions "Ezra" alone (ap. Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.*, iv. 26).

(*c*) The ancient Jewish tradition preserved in the Talmud (*Baba bathra* fol. 14 c. 2), respecting the order and authorship of the Hebrew Scriptures, mentions "Ezra" alone, and makes no reference to Nehemiah.

(*d*) The Massoretes, the renowned but nameless Jewish Scholars of the Middle Ages, who appended to each book in the Hebrew Bible notes relating to the number of words, letters, sections &c. in the book, treated Ezra and Nehemiah as a single continuous work. No Massoretic notes are found after Ezra x. 44 till we come to the end of Nehemiah, and then they relate to the contents of our two books reckoned together. For instance, they state Neh. iii. 22 to be the middle verse of the book.

(*e*) In the great Jewish Commentaries, e.g. of Rashi, Aben Ezra, the exposition passes directly from Ezra x. 44 to Neh. i. 1. The transition is, not that from one book to another, but, as it were, from one paragraph or chapter, in the same author, to another.

(*f*) In the Hebrew MSS., the earliest of which dates from about the tenth cent. A.D., Ezra and Nehemiah are found as one book. In some instances, slight marks of the division have been introduced, generally by a later hand; they indicate the departure from the customary Hebrew tradition, and have been inserted, by way of concession to the influence of the Christian Bible, and for the sake of facilitating reference.

It is not until the 16th cent. A.D. that the practice of dividing

[1] In all probability Josephus included in his numeration of thirteen, (1) Joshua, (2) Judges and Ruth, (3) Samuel, (4) Kings, (5) Isaiah, (6) Jeremiah and Lamentations, (7) Ezekiel, (8) Minor Prophets, (9) Job, (10) Daniel, (11) Esther, (12) Ezra-Nehemiah, (13) Chronicles. (*Contra Apionem*, c. 8.)

the one book into two is found introduced in Jewish copies of the Hebrew Scriptures. The division appears in the *printed* Hebrew Bible of Daniel Bomberg (Venice, 1525); and is now generally adopted.

In the Christian Church, the evidence tends to show that the division into two books was not the earliest form in which they were known. In the oldest of the MSS. of the LXX. Version (the Vatican, Sinaitic, Alexandrine) Ezra and Nehemiah are one book: in the Vatican, Neh. i. 1 begins in the same line with Ezra x. 44. The Syriac and the Old Latin Versions made no division; and the Fathers, in enumerating the contents of the Old Testament, reckon "Ezra" as a single book, although they accepted its division into two portions.

Origen (*ob.* 253) is the first who speaks of two books, which he calls the First and Second Ezra. But as he is careful to state that, in the Hebrew, they were one book, his evidence enables us to infer with confidence, (1) that the division into two books did not, in Origen's opinion, represent the original Hebrew usage, (2) that the division into two books very possibly had its rise in Alexandria, and either originated among the Christians, or was borrowed by them from the Jews, of that city.

The separation into two books came into general use in the Church. The Fathers, however, were careful to reckon them, not as two books, but as two portions of the same book, like the books of Samuel and Kings. It was recognised that the Christian usage differed from that of the Jewish Church (cf. Jerome, *Prol. Gal.*, Esdras qui et ipse apud Graecos et Latinos in duos libros divisus est).

Some scholars, indeed, have made the suggestion that the divided form of the books is the original one. They have pointed out that, according to the tradition, the Twelve Minor Prophets were collected by the Jews into a single volume lest writings of so small a size should be lost sight of, and that they then ranked as one book among the Hebrew Scriptures. On that analogy, it has been asked, may not Ezra and Nehemiah have been similarly treated by the Jews as one

work, and by the scribes have been united although originally separate treatises? May not the tradition of the Alexandrian, and, if so, of the Christian usage, be more strictly true to literary history than the tradition of Hebrew usage?

This plea has generally been put forward on the assumption, now generally rejected, that the two books were written, the one by Ezra, and the other by Nehemiah. But while this view as to authorship cannot now, at any rate, be tacitly assumed, the analogy also of the Twelve Minor Prophets proves, on closer inspection, to be most misleading.

(1) Hebrew Tradition, it is true, treated the Twelve Minor Prophets as one book; but Hebrew Tradition never lost sight of the fact that they were twelve distinct literary compositions. On the other hand, there is no indication in Hebrew Tradition, that Ezra was ever regarded as a combination of two books.

(2) The Twelve Minor Prophets were collected into one book because of their brevity, lest they should be lost, and also probably, that, when united, they might rank in size with Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. But neither Ezra nor Nehemiah was so small that there could be any fear of their being lost sight of. On such an hypothesis, why should Esther have been left by itself?

(3) The Twelve Minor Prophets, although treated as one book, are obviously distinct from one another, in subject-matter, style, and structure. But with Ezra and Nehemiah, the case is quite different. The same method of treatment runs throughout both books; both are narratives formed by compilation; there is less break between Ezra x. and Nehemiah i. than there is between Ezra vi. and Ezra vii.

(4) Finally, it is due to a misconception, to suppose that there is any conflict between Hebrew usage and the Alexandrine or Christian usage. The oldest MSS. of the LXX. agree with the Hebrew use; and the Fathers who adopt the division of Ezra into two books, adopt it as the custom of the Greek and Latin Bible, but make no claim for its superior antiquity to the Hebrew usage.

The only appropriate analogy is that which is offered by the

other narrative books of the Old Testament. In the Hebrew Scriptures, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles ranked each as one book. In the Greek and Latin Bibles, they were each divided into two portions, called First and Second. The parallel is complete. In the Hebrew Bible, "Ezra" was one book; in the Christian Bible, it appears as two books with the names of First and Second Ezra.

When we enquire the reasons that led to the subdivision of Ezra and of the other historical books, we can only conjecture that they were considerations of a purely practical nature, e.g. the desirability of having books uniform in size, more portable, or easier for purposes of reference.

§ 2. *Name.*

Among the Jews, the name of Ezra was invariably given to the work which comprised our Ezra and Nehemiah.

In the Christian Church, there has been a certain amount of variation in the designation employed.

(1) In lists of the Old Testament books, which agreed with the Hebrew Canon of Scripture, the title of "Ezra" was generally adopted; and wherever the division into two books was followed, the two books were called the First and Second of Ezra.

(2) In lists of the Old Testament which include the Apocryphal books, an element of confusion is caused by the Apocryphal "Ezra," our First Book of Esdras. In the LXX. Version, the Old Latin, and the Syriac, this Apocryphal Greek Book was placed, out of regard probably for chronology, before the Hebrew Ezra, and was called the First of Ezra (Ἔσδρας α′), while our Ezra and Nehemiah appeared as one book, with the title of the Second of Ezra (Ἔσδρας β′).

(3) In his translation of the Vulgate, Jerome did not recognise the Canonicity of the Apocryphal Books. He translated the Hebrew Ezra (our Ezra and Nehemiah) as one book with the title of Ezra; but he acquiesced in the division of the Canonical Ezra into two books, for he speaks of the Apocryphal books as the Third and Fourth of Ezra. "Nec quemquam

moveat quod *unus* a nobis editus liber est: nec apocryphorum *tertii et quarti* somniis delectetur: quia et apud Hebraeos Ezrae Nehemiaeque sermones in unum volumen coarctantur; et quae non habentur apud illos nec de viginti quatuor senibus sunt, procul abjicienda" (*Praefat. in Ezram*). In the Vulgate, accordingly, Ezra and Nehemiah were called the First and Second of Ezra; the Apocryphal Greek Ezra was called the Third of Ezra; the Apocalyptic work, the Fourth of Ezra.

The name of "Nehemiah," given to the Second Book of Ezra, is first found in the writings of Jerome.

In the Codex Alexandrinus, the title of Ezra and Nehemiah is "Ezra the Priest."

In the Syriac Version, Ezra is called, "the Book of Ezra the Prophet;" in the Arabic Version, "the First Book of Ezra the Priest, the Scribe." In the Arabic Version, Nehemiah is called "the Second Book of Ezra the Priest" (cf. Walton's Polyglott).

The influence of the Vulgate caused the names applied to the books in that version to be generally adopted in the West. At the Council of Trent, Ezra and Nehemiah are called "the first book of Ezra and the second of Ezra which is called Nehemiah" (Esdrae primus et secundus qui dicitur Nehemias).

In the English Bibles, they were, at first, always called, "The First and Second of Ezra." But the names "Ezra," "Nehemiah," gradually came into favour during the latter part of the 16th cent. The following titles will illustrate the change.

In Wycliffe's Bible, the titles are "The First and Second Books of Esdras."

In Myles Coverdale's Translation (1535) Ezra is called, "The first boke of Esdras," and Nehemiah, "The seconde boke of Esdras, otherwyse called the boke of Nehemias."

In the first edition of Matthew's Bible (1537) we find, "The fyrst boke of Esdras the Prophete," and "The seconde boke of Esdras, otherwyse called the boke of Nehemiah," but in the edition of 1551 this latter title appears as "The boke of Nehemias, otherwyse called the second booke of Esdras."

Similarly the title, "The seconde booke of Esdras, otherwise called the booke of Nehemia," in the 1568 edition of the

Bishops' Bible, appears in the 1595 edition as "The booke of Nehemias, or seconde booke of Esdras."

In the Geneva Bible (1560) we find the titles "Ezra" and "Nehemiah."

The Douay Bible (1609) has "The First Booke of Esdras," and "The Booke of Nehemias which is also called The Second of Esdras."

The discontinuance of the Titles, "The First and Second of Ezra," is not so much due to any controversial desire for a departure from the custom of the Vulgate version as to the influence of the principle that the translation of the Old Testament was to be taken from the Hebrew text; and, as has been shewn, the old Hebrew text knew nothing of the division into a First and a Second Book of Ezra. But the alternative title of "Nehemiah" had been in common ecclesiastical use; it seemed to be sanctioned by the great authority of Jerome; and the superscription at the head of the second portion of the Hebrew book had caused this name to be attached to it in the more modern Hebrew Bibles. "Ezra," therefore, was the name reserved for the first portion of the Hebrew book, "Nehemiah" was the name given to the second. The two Apocryphal books, being distinguished from the Canonical, by the Latin name for Ezra, 'Esdras,' received in the English Bible the titles which, in the Vulgate, belong to the two Canonical Books.

§ 3. *Contents.*

The period of history, comprised in the books Ezra and Nehemiah, extends over a little more than a century. Ezra opens with the Decree of Cyrus (538). The last chapter of Nehemiah records incidents which occurred in 432 B.C. (xiii. 6). It is true that lists in Neh. xii. contain the names of personages who flourished in the 4th cent. (xii. 10, 22). But the narrative proper is concerned with events that took place in a particular period of less than a hundred and ten years (538—432). The occurrence of names belonging to a later generation only proves that the formation of the whole work, in its present form, dates from a period, in all probability, subsequent to the lifetime of the

individuals referred to, and therefore very considerably later than the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

In neither book do we find a continuous history of any large number of years. Indeed, no attempt is made to supply a consecutive narrative. For the most part, the books Ezra and Nehemiah consist of records containing the narrative of two most important epochs in the history of the people, (1) the Return from the Captivity, and the Building of the Temple, (2) the Reforms of Ezra, and the Governorship of Nehemiah. It is, however, particularly noteworthy that the interval of nearly 60 years which separates these epochs is passed over in complete silence, save for the reference in Ezra iv. 6 and Neh. xii. 26, and that shorter intervals, one of 15 years, 536—521 B.C., one of 13 years, 458—445 B.C. (save for the misplaced episode of Ezra iv. 7—23), and another of 12 years, 444—432 B.C., are practically omitted from the history.

This treatment of the narrative points to the following rough analysis of the contents of the two books, the longest interval of silence being treated as the main natural division.

A. The Restoration, 538—516 B.C.
Ezra i.—vi. (except iv. 7—24).
(*a*) 538—536 B.C. The Return from Babylon, the Dedication of the Altar, the Laying of the Temple Foundations (Ezra i.—iii.).
(*b*) 536, 521—516 B.C. Samaritan Opposition; Resumption of the work, and Completion of the Temple (Ezra iv. 1—6, v., vi.).

B. The Foundation of Judaism, 458—432 B.C.
Ezra vii.—x., iv. 7—24. Nehemiah.
(*a*) 458—457 B.C. The Mission of Ezra, and the Expulsion of the Foreign Wives (Ezra vii.—x.).
(*b*) 456—445 B.C. (?) Hostility to the Jews (Ezra iv. 7—24); an unknown disaster.
(*c*) 445—444 B.C. Nehemiah's Governorship, the Rebuilding and Dedication of the Walls, the Covenant of the Law, Reforms (Neh. i.—xii.).
(*d*) 432 B.C. Nehemiah's Second Visit to Jerusalem (Neh. xiii.).

This brief analysis is enough to show that the contents of these books are not so much a continuous history as a selection of incidents which illustrate the beginnings of Judaism. The loose manner in which the incidents follow one another arises from the character of the work. Our two books, like the other historical books of the Hebrew Scriptures, are, in the main, a compilation from various sources, and, in their preparation, little effort has been made to connect the materials together artistically. The Jewish historian was not careful to conceal the composite structure of his narrative.

§ 4. *Structure.*

The process by which the contents of these books were compiled, is rendered apparent by

(1) The abruptness of transition from one incident or subject to another, e.g. in Ezra ii. 1, v. 1, vii. 1, ix. 1; Neh. i. 1, vii. 73 *b*, xii. 27, xiii. 4;

(2) The intermittent usage of the 1st Person without any words to explain the cause of its introduction or its disuse;

(3) The insertion of two considerable sections written in the Aramaic dialect, i.e. Ezra iv. 8—vi. 18, vii. 12—26;

(4) The abrupt introduction of lists without any immediate relevance to the context in which they occur, e.g. Neh. vii. 6—73, xi. 3—36, xii. 1—26;

(5) And the mention of important names, without explanation, as if they had occurred in the foregoing context, e.g. Zerubbabel, Ezra ii. 2, iii. 2; Ahasuerus, Darius, Ezra iv. 5, 6, vi. 15, Neh. xii. 22; Hoshaiah, Neh. xii. 32.

The various writings included in the compilation of Ezra and Nehemiah may be roughly classified as follows:

A. Extracts from the personal memoirs of

(1) Ezra, Ezra vii. 27—viii. 34, ix. 1—15.

(2) Nehemiah, Neh. i. 1—vii. 73, xii. 27—43, xiii. 4—31.

B. Lists, &c., presumably obtained from official sources, of

(1) The vessels of the Temple, (Ezra i. 9—11).
(2) The Jews that returned with Zerubbabel, (Ezra ii. 1—70; Neh. vii. 6—73).
(3) Those that married strange wives, (Ezra x. 20—44).
(4) Those that builded the wall, (Neh. iii.).
(5) Those that sealed the Covenant, (Neh. x. 1—27).
(6) The dwellers in Jerusalem and in other cities, (Neh. xi. 3—36).
(7) Priests and Levites, (Neh. xii. 1—26).

C. Extracts, with certain adaptations, from Aramaic writings.

(1) An Aramaic historical work, Ezra iv. 7—vi. 18.
(2) The royal rescript in Ezra vii. 12—26.

D. Extract from, or adaptation of, a contemporary chronicle, Neh. vii. 73*b*—x.

E. The Compiler's own writing, Ezra i. 1—8, iii.—iv. 6, vi. 19—22, vii. 1—11 (viii. 35, 36), x. 1—19; Neh. xii. 44—xiii. 3.

A. (1) The extracts quoted above from the Memoirs of Ezra are distinguishable by the use of the 1st pers. sing., Ezra vii. 27, 28, viii. 1, 15—17, 21—26, 28, 31, 32, ix. 1, 3—6, 7, 8, where Ezra is clearly the spokesman. The authorship of these extracts has never been disputed. They have a fairly distinct style. Where the 3rd person is resumed, the Compiler probably abridges Ezra's Memoirs, or follows another source of information. Characteristic of Ezra's writing are vii. 28, "according to the hand of the LORD my God upon me," viii. 18 "according to the good hand of our God upon us," 22, 31 (cf. Neh. ii. 8); the mention of "males" in the list contained in viii. 3—14; the description of acts of worship, viii. 21—23; ix. 3—6; the mention of details of locality, e.g. viii. 15 "the river that runneth to Ahava"; 17 "at the place Casiphia"; 21, 31 "at the river Ahava"; of time, e.g. viii. 15 "three days"; 31 "the twelfth day of the first month"; 32 "three days"; 33 "the fourth day."

(2) The extracts from the Memoirs of Nehemiah may also be recognised by the use of the 1st pers. sing. throughout Neh. i. 1—vii. 5. The style, moreover, of Nehemiah, is more distinct and vigorous than that of Ezra. It is marked by his fondness for particular expressions, e.g. "my God," ii. 8, 12, 18, v. 19, vi. 14, vii. 5, xiii. 14, 22, 29, 31; "God of heaven," i. 4, ii. 4, 20; "the nobles and the rulers," ii. 16, iv. 19, v. 7, vii. 5 (xii. 40), xiii. 11, 17; "my servants" lit. "young men" iv. 23, v. 10, 16, xiii. 19. His language brings the writer's character vividly before us; the somewhat self-complacent tone of the prayer for personal recompense, Neh. v. 19, xiii. 14, 22, 31; the energetic vigour of the man, e.g. ii. 12—15, iv. 13—23, v. 13, vi. 10, xiii. 8, 19—21, 25; his hatred of the Samaritans, ii. 10, 19, 20, iv. 1—5, vi. 14, xiii. 29.

B. Respecting the Lists embodied in these Books, it may be said that they are generally of a kind which we should expect to be kept in a public record office, and that the abruptness with which they are introduced is an indication of their being genuine extracts.

The practical identity of Ezra ii. 1 &c. with Neh. vii. 6 &c. is noteworthy. It is clear from Neh. vii. 5, that Nehemiah, finding this list of those that returned with Zerubbabel, deemed it of such importance that he transcribed it into his own memoirs. The Compiler, either copying from the same original list, or extracting it from Nehemiah's Memoirs, introduced it in Ezra ii. at the suitable point in his narrative.

It appears probable that the lists, and extracts from lists inserted into the narrative, were considerably abridged by the Compiler, or modified to suit his purpose. In illustration of this, the reader should compare the genealogy of Ezra in Ezra vii. 1—5, with that in 1 Chron. v. 29—41, and the lists of the Priests and Levites in Neh. xi. with those in 1 Chron. ix. Even Nehemiah's list of those that cooperated in the Restoration of the Walls bears signs of being incomplete. (See the notes on Neh. iii.) Whether the list had become mutilated or the Compiler was not careful to transcribe it in its entirety, we cannot

attempt to say. The fact also that it is often very difficult to distinguish in these lists whether the names indicate individuals or houses, e.g. in Ezra x. 20—43, Neh. xi., xii., suggests that the names are derived from ancient lists which were often copied and often probably epitomised. At any rate, the same ambiguity does not present itself in the Memoirs of Ezra and Nehemiah, and is very probably to be accounted for by the curt and technical language of official registers.

C. The Aramaic portions (Ezra iv. 8—vi. 18, vii. 12—26) are an interesting feature in the Book of Ezra. It is to be observed that the use of the Aramaic language is not confined to the *contents* of the official letters (iv. 11—16, 17—22, v. 7—17, vi. 3—12, xii. 11—26), but is employed also in the narrative setting in which the letters stand (iv. 8—10, iv. 23—v. 7, vi. 1—3, 13—18). It is not, therefore, correct to say that the Aramaic portions are merely the exact reproduction of public documents written in the official language of the day. The use of the Aramaic by itself is no proof that the actual documents are reproduced. For the Aramaic employed is the Hebrew variety of that dialect; and it is not probable that this would be the type of speech adopted at the court of Susa, as well as by the officials of the Samaritans. The most probable explanation seems to be that the Compiler has, in the former passage, and possibly, also, in the latter, availed himself of an historical work written in Aramaic, from which he has made extracts. But he does not appear to have considered himself bound to reproduce the extracts with any rigid exactness. The Compiler himself could write in Aramaic with as much freedom as in Hebrew, and there seems good reason to suppose that he has interpolated his own sentiments into the Aramaic extract, and even expanded it in order to make it harmonize with the rest of the work. Thus, iv. 24, in the Aramaic section, clearly refers back to iv. 5 in the Hebrew; the transition from the Aramaic vi. 18 to the Hebrew vi. 19 is unaccompanied by any change in subject or even in style, and the whole passage (vi. 1—18), which precedes the resumption of the Hebrew, if based on the Aramaic source,

reflects the modifying influence of the Compiler's own style, e.g. vi. 9 compared with iii. 4; vi. 9, 10 the title "God of heaven," cf. i. 2; vi. 12 "the God that hath caused his name to dwell there"; vi. 14 "the king of Persia"; vi. 16—18, the description of Levitical worship.

D. Neh. vii. 73*b*—x. The introduction of this section interrupts the Memoirs of Nehemiah (Neh. i.--vii. 73*a*). Both Ezra and Nehemiah are referred to in the 3rd pers. sing. (viii. 1—6, 9, 13, 18, x. 2), while the use of the 1st pers. plur. in chap. x. 1, 31, 33, 40, suggests the writing of an eye-witness, or of a contemporary, but not of Nehemiah or Ezra. The characteristic style of Nehemiah disappears. Nehemiah himself suddenly recedes into the background, and is only mentioned twice (viii. 9, x. 1), and then as Tirshatha, a title he himself never uses in his undisputed Memoirs.

There is nothing to justify the theory that the section comes from Ezra's pen. If it contained his "Memoirs" we should expect the use of the 1st pers. sing. as in Ezra vii. 27—ix. 15. The possibility may be admitted that the Compiler has here, instead of incorporating extracts from Ezra's Memoirs, contented himself with summarizing their contents, as in Ezra x.

But the most probable opinion is that Neh. vii. 73*b*—x. is derived from a distinct historical source, from a narrative composed at, or shortly after, the time of the events described.

From the prominence given to the Levites throughout the section, and from many similarities in style and language, it is perhaps natural to compare Neh. vii. 73—x. with Chronicles. But the details which characterize this section suggest a much earlier date for its composition than the age of the Chronicler. And the similarity of style is due, partly to the presence of the prevalent features of post-Exilic writing, partly to the process of editing, in the course of which the Compiler doubtless introduced many of his own later turns of expression.

E. The remaining sections of these Books (Ezr. i. 1—8, iii. 1—iv. 6, vi. 19—22, vii. 1—11 (viii. 35, 36), x. 1—19; Neh. xii.

44—xiii. 3), bear a very scanty proportion to the whole. Even of these it is difficult to say how far the Compiler is basing his narrative on existing historical material, and how far they are his own composition and rest on oral tradition. They are marked by certain clear characteristics of style and language, which, coupled with a general resemblance in the treatment of the narrative, have given such great probability to the view that the Compiler of Ezra and Nehemiah is identical with the Chronicler or Compiler of the Books of Chronicles. (For the statement of this theory, see below.)

It has often been maintained that Ezra vii. 1—11, x. 1—19, were written by Ezra, and Neh. xii. 44—xiii. 3 by Nehemiah.

Respecting Ezra vii. 1—11, x. 1—19, it should be enough to point out the use of the 3rd pers. when Ezra is spoken of, and to compare it with the undisputed extract from Ezra's writing (vii. 27—ix. 15) in which he employs the 1st person. Moreover, it is not consistent with what we should expect from Ezra's authorship, either that he should begin his genealogy, not with his father, but with an ancestor who had died more than a century before (vii. 1, "Ezra, the son of Seraiah"); or that he should refer to himself in such terms of eulogy, as in vii. 6, 10; or that in vii. 7—9, by the mention of his journey to Jerusalem, he should anticipate in the 3rd pers. the full autobiographical memoir of the same event contained in chap. viii.

In Ezra x. 1—19 the sudden resumption of the 3rd pers. sing. in reference to Ezra, indicates unmistakably that the Compiler ceases to reproduce the memoir. The theory that Ezra speaks of himself in the 3rd person because he describes himself as acting in an official capacity seems to carry its own refutation with it; and the Memoirs of Nehemiah the Governor, indeed of Ezra himself, in chaps. viii. and ix., are a conclusive argument against its correctness. On the other hand, from the strangely unfinished character of the narrative in Ezra x. (e.g. *vv.* 15, 19), as compared with chap. ix., and from the interval that clearly intervenes between the arrival of Ezra in Jerusalem and the arrival of Nehemiah, we might reasonably infer that the Compiler had no longer before him the actual Memoirs of Ezra, or

that he had been relying upon a narrative in which those Memoirs suddenly failed.

Another solution proposed, is, that the remainder of Ezra's Memoirs contained a record of disaster and disappointment which the Compiler was not willing to incorporate into his narrative.

The short passage, Neh. xii. 44—xiii. 3, which refers generally to the period of Nehemiah as "that day" should probably be ascribed to the Compiler. In style and phraseology it stands in fairly evident contrast to the vigorous style of Nehemiah's Memoirs.

§ 5. *Date and Authorship: Relation to the Books of Chronicles.*

The date to be assigned to the compilation of Ezra and Nehemiah can hardly be earlier, and is very possibly later, than 320 B.C.

This, at any rate, is the inference from the language used in Neh. xii. In verse 26 "These were in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor, and of Ezra the priest, the scribe," and in verse 47 "in the days of Zerubbabel, and in the days of Nehemiah," the period of Nehemiah is regarded as one that is already long past; while from verses 10, 11, 22 we certainly are led to conclude that at least two generations had elapsed since the generation of Nehemiah. In verses 10, 11 we read "Eliashib begat Joiada, and Joiada begat Jonathan, and Jonathan begat Jaddua"; in verse 22 we find mentioned "the days of Eliashib, Joiada, and Johanan, and Jaddua." Now, undoubtedly, these names are the names of High Priests. In Nehemiah's time, the High Priest was Eliashib (Neh. xiii. 4, 28); in the time of Alexander the Great, the name of the High Priest, according to Josephus (*Ant.* xi. 7, 8), was Jaddua. The reference to "the days of" Eliashib, Joiada, Johanan and Jaddua is obviously an attempt to reckon the chronology of former times by the Jewish High-Priesthood. The use of the expression, "in the days of

...Jaddua," suggests that Jaddua's High-Priesthood was already past history at the time when this chapter was compiled.

In confirmation of this late date should be mentioned (*a*) the reference in xii. 23 to "the book of the Chronicles," a work which seems to have contained the register of the Levites down to the High-Priesthood of Johanan, if not of Jaddua ; (*b*) the mention in xii. 22 of Darius the Persian, who, in all probability, is to be identified with Darius Codomannus (335—330 B.C.), the contemporary of Jaddua, who was overthrown by Alexander the Great.

The use of the formula "the King of Persia" in Ezra i. 1, 2, 8, iii. 7, iv. 3, 5, 7, 24, vi. 14, vii. 1, as compared with the simple appellation of "the King" used in the writings of Ezra and Nehemiah (e.g. Ezra viii. 1; Neh. ii. 1, v. 14) is also very possibly to be regarded as an indication that the compiler, whose hand is unmistakable in these portions of the narrative, wrote at a time when the Empire of Persia had been broken up and the defining words "of Persia" would not be superfluous.

This evidence for the late date to which the compilation of Ezra and Nehemiah should be assigned, has sometimes been discredited on the ground that it consists chiefly of words and phrases which might easily have been interpolated by scribes, or introduced at some late revision of the work. But the existing authorities for the text fail to show variations of reading in connexion with the words and phrases in question. And it is evident that the allegation of their recent insertion is only put forward with the object of upholding or rendering possible the traditional views of authorship.

According to Jewish tradition, "Ezra wrote his own book," i.e. the whole Hebrew work which comprises Ezra and Nehemiah. But in the Christian Church, it has been the opinion most commonly held that Ezra and Nehemiah wrote the books to which their names are given. Yet this traditional opinion rests on no trustworthy evidence, and is very largely based upon the accident of the title.

In the case of the book of Ezra, Ezra's own share in the work is unmistakable. But there is no appearance of his being the writer of the remainder, and no such claim is made on his

behalf. The events which he describes as an eye-witness relate to a few months only. His personal narrative breaks off abruptly at a point very shortly after his arrival at Jerusalem. Had Ezra himself been the Compiler of the book, it is inconceivable that he should have passed over the interval between 516 B.C. and 458 B.C. without a word: for the events of that interval would have been well known to him, and would probably have explained the purpose of his mission. Had Ezra himself been the Compiler, he would surely not have devoted so much space to the preliminaries of his mission, and then have recorded but one incident of his administration.

Again, had Ezra been the Compiler there was no need for him to pass from the 3rd Pers. to the 1st, and then again from the 1st to the 3rd, in the description of scenes in which he himself was an actor.

All, however, is explained when the book of Ezra is viewed as a compilation made at a much later date. The narrative is not continuous, because the Compiler's object is to preserve particular records, not to weave an artistic history. Ezra's autobiographical Memoirs are sometimes transcribed *verbatim*, and then the 1st Person remains; at other times, they are only summarised, and then the 1st Person is changed to the 3rd.

In the case of the book of Nehemiah, the claim that Nehemiah was himself the Compiler is equally improbable. The extracts from his Memoirs are, from their marked characteristics of style, more easily separable from the rest of the work. Had Nehemiah himself been the Compiler, he would never have interrupted his own narrative by the section vii. 73 *b*—x. 39, leaving the substance of vii. 1—5 incomplete; nor should we have been left in ignorance as to the length of his Governorship, nor, as has before been pointed out, would the reference in Neh. xii. 26, 47 to "the days of Nehemiah" have been found on either side of a passage (vv. 27—43) containing the autobiographical words of Nehemiah himself.

The attempts however to identify the Compiler of this book with Nehemiah have led to the most fanciful explanations of the mention of the name of Jaddua (330 B.C.) in Neh. xii. 11,

22. Thus it has been conjectured, that the Artaxerxes whom Nehemiah served was Artaxerxes II. Mnemon (404—361 B.C.); that Nehemiah was governor so late as 371 B.C.; and that Jaddua is referred to not in his capacity of High-priest, but as the youngest member of the High-priestly family in direct succession. Others have preferred the simpler but more violent remedy of condemning the obnoxious passages in Neh. xii. 11, 22, 23, 47 as later interpolations.

But these conjectures are not needed. The claim of authorship advanced for Ezra and Nehemiah rests on no foundation. The difficulties presented by the structure are capable of a natural explanation upon the view that the books are the result of compilation, and that the Compiler did his work at the close of the fourth or the beginning of the third century B.C. This is the conclusion to which an investigation of the structure and contents irresistibly impels us. And this conclusion leads to another enquiry by which the unknown Compiler is possibly to be more closely identified. At this point therefore is to be noticed the interesting question of the connexion of our books, Ezra and Nehemiah, with the Books of Chronicles. The close resemblance which exists between them has long attracted the observation of Biblical students. The opinion has become increasingly prevalent that such a resemblance cannot be accidental. And indeed a careful investigation of the evidence shows how strong is the probability that the compiler of Chronicles is the same as the compiler of Ezra and Nehemiah.

1. The general *character* of the books is the same. The historical narrative consists chiefly of extracts compiled from different sources, and especial prominence is given to genealogical lists.

2. The *historical treatment* is the same. The narrative is concerned with great crises in the religious history of the people. The so-called "Levitical tendency," which characterizes the Books of Chronicles, is conspicuous also in Ezra and Nehemiah, although there the insertion of continuous extracts from contemporary memoirs offers by comparison less scope.

Under this head, the following points may be noticed:

(*a*) In Ezra and Nehemiah there is the same fondness for statistical and genealogical lists as in the Books of Chronicles.

Ezra i. 9—11, the list of sacred vessels and implements; ii. the list of those who returned with Zerubbabel; vii. 1—6, the genealogy of Ezra; viii. 1—14, 18—20, the list of those who returned with Ezra; x. 20—44, the list of those who "married strange women."

Nehemiah iii. the list of those who took part in the restoration of the walls; vii. 6—73, the same list as Ezra ii.; x. 1—27, the list of those "that sealed" the covenant; xi. 3—36, the list of the dwellers in the cities of Judah and Benjamin; xii. 1—26, the lists of priests and Levites.

(*b*) In Ezra and Nehemiah, as in the Books of Chronicles, religious festivals and observances are described with great minuteness.

Ezra iii. 1—7, the dedication of the altar of burnt offering; iii. 8—13, the foundation of the Temple; vi. 15—18, the dedication of the Temple; vi. 19—22, the celebration of the Passover; viii. 35, the burnt offerings; x. 1—14, the people's confession of guilt.

Nehemiah vii. 73—viii. 12, the reading of the Law; viii. 13—18, the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles; ix. 1—5, 38, the Confession and the Covenant; x. 29—39, the provisions of the Covenant; xii. 27—43, the dedication of the city walls. Cf. 1 Chron. xiii. xv. xvi., 2 Chron. v.—vii. 10, xxix.—xxxi.

(*c*) In Ezra and Nehemiah, as in the Books of Chronicles, particular prominence is given to the mention of the Levites and other attendants of the Temple. Thus the Levites, who are only twice mentioned in the Books of Samuel (1 Sam. vi. 15, 2 Sam. xv. 24) and but once in the Books of Kings (1 Kings viii. 4) are referred to by name more than 60 times in Ezra and Nehemiah, and about 100 times in the Books of Chronicles. See Ezra ii. 41, 42, 70, iii. 8—12, vi. 16, 20, vii. 7, 13, 24, viii. 20, 29, 30, x. 5; Nehemiah vii. 1, 44, 73, viii. 7—13, x. 9—28, 34—38, xi. 15—18, xii. 8, 22--24, 30, 44—47, xiii. 5, 10, 13, 22, 30.

The Singers, in connexion with the Temple worship, so often referred to in Ezra and Nehemiah (cf. Ezra ii. 41, 65, 70, vii. 7,

x. 24; Neh. vii. 1, 44, 73, x. 28, 39, xi. 22, 23, 28, 29, 42, 45—47, xiii. 5, 10) are similarly mentioned in the Books of Chronicles; but elsewhere they are scarcely ever, if ever (cf. 1 Kings x. 12; Ezek. xl. 44), certainly spoken of as Temple servants.

The Porters, again, are not referred to in other books of the Old Testament as forming part of the Temple staff except in Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra ii. 42, 70, vii. 7, x. 24; Neh. vii. 1. 45, 73, x. 28, 39, xii. 25, 45, 47, xiii. 5) and (some 18 times) in the Books of Chronicles.

The Nethinim, so often mentioned in Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra ii. 43, 58, 70, vii. 7, 24, viii. 17, 20; Neh. iii. 26, 31, vii. 46, 60, 73, x. 28, xi. 3, 21), are nowhere save in the Books of Chronicles (1 Chron. ix. 2) mentioned in the Old Testament.

3. The close similarity in style and diction will be more apparent to the Hebrew student than to the English reader. But the degree of resemblance may be understood from selected examples; and the force of the argument from resemblance in diction is greatly increased when it is observed that the great majority of the examples are found in those portions of Ezra and Nehemiah which belong to the writing of the compiler himself.

1. "fathers' houses," Ezra ii. 59, x. 16; Neh. vii. 61, x. 35, and more than 20 times in the Books of Chronicles.

2. "heads of fathers' houses," Ezra i. 5, ii. 68, iii. 12, iv. 2, 3, viii. 1, x. 16; Neh. vii. 70, 71, viii. 13, xi. 13, xii. 12, 22, 23, and more than 20 times in the Books of Chronicles.

3. "the house of God," frequently in Ezra and Nehemiah (e.g. Ezra i. 4, ii. 68, iii. 8, vi. 22, x. 6; Neh. vi. 10, viii. 16, xi. 16, xii. 40, xiii. 7, 11), and more than 30 times in the Books of Chronicles.

4. "people of the countries," "peoples of the lands," e.g. Ezra iii. 3, ix. 1, 2, 7, 11; Neh. ix. 30, x. 28, and more than 12 times in the Books of Chronicles.

5. the Hebrew words rendered "courses" (Ezra vi. 18; Neh. xi. 36; cf. 2 Chr. xxxv. 5), "cymbals" (Ezra iii. 10; Neh. xii. 27), "genealogy" (Ezra ii. 62, viii. 1, 3; Neh. vii. 5, 64).

"joy" (Ezra vi. 16; Neh. viii. 10; cf. 1 Chron. xvi. 27).

"in their place" (Neh. viii. 7, ix. 3, xiii. 11; 2 Chron. xxx. 16).

The examples quoted above occur in the Hebrew Bible only in the Books of Chronicles and in Ezra and Nehemiah. As characteristic of the Chronicler's style, may also be noted the Hebrew phrases rendered as follows:

"to have the oversight of the work &c." Ezra iii. 8, 9; cf. 1 Chron. xv. 21 (='to lead').

"after the order of king David" Ezra iii. 10; cf. 1 Chron. xxv. 2, 6; 2 Chron. xxiii. 18.

"day by day" Ezra iii. 4; Neh. viii. 18; cf. 1 Chron. xii. 22.

"afar off" Ezra iii 13; Neh. xii. 43; cf. 2 Chron. xxvi. 15.

"morning and evening" Ezra iii. 3; cf. 1 Chron. xvi. 40, 2 Chron. ii. 3.

"make a proclamation" Ezra i. 1, x. 7; Neh. viii. 15; cf. 2 Chron. xxx. 5, xxxvi. 22.

"willingly offer" Ezra i. 6, ii. 68, iii. 5; Neh. xi. 2; cf. 1 Chron. xxix. 5, 6, 9, 14, 17, 2 Chron. xvii. 16.

"with joy," "great joy" Ezra iii. 12, vi. 22; Neh. viii. 17, xii. 43; cf. 1 Chron. xv. 25, 2 Chron. xxix. 30, 36, xxx. 21, 23, 26.

"as it is written" Ezra iii. 2, 4, vi. 18; Neh. viii. 14, 15, x. 34, 36; cf. 2 Chron. xxiii. 18, xxx. 5, 18, xxxv. 12, &c.

"praise and give thanks" Ezra iii. 11; Neh. xii. 24; cf. 1 Chron. xvi. 4, xxiii. 30, &c.

§ 6. *Outline of History.*

i. *The Decree of Cyrus.* In the year 538 B.C. Babylon fell. The great Babylonian Empire, whose western frontier was washed by the waters of the Mediterranean, passed almost without a blow from Nabonidus, the last of the Babylonian dynasty, into the hands of Cyrus, king of Elam and Persia.

The conqueror's first act was to conciliate an important element in the population of his new possessions. With the view of weakening resistance to their authority, the kings of Babylon had followed the policy of forcibly removing from their homes

the inhabitants of whole towns and districts, and of transplanting them either to regions recently desolated by this process or to the vast area included within the walls of Babylon. The temper of colonists forcibly torn from their own country was little favourable to the central government, and they were ready to welcome an invader as a deliverer and avenger. The successes of Cyrus had doubtless been assisted by the secret intrigues of this numerous class. The Jewish captives in Babylon had eagerly looked for the coming of Cyrus.

The Decree of Cyrus granted permission to those who had been carried away captive to return to their own land, and to carry back with them the sacred images of their gods which Babylonian armies had taken from their native shrines. It was a measure of true wisdom and clemency; for it removed from the centre of the empire a dangerous source of disaffection, and dispersed into every quarter subjects who were gratified by the action of their new monarch, and who felt themselves rewarded for their own share of peril in having supported his invasion. The Jews were not the only people to benefit by the Decree. But, in their case, especial consideration may have been shown. The captives of other races carried home the images of their gods. The worshipper of Jehovah had no images. The Jews were commissioned to build again the Temple of Jehovah at Jerusalem, and the sacred vessels were given back to them that Nebuchadnezzar had carried away.

With natural patriotic vanity later Jewish tradition considered that their nation alone had been singled out to receive the favour of the great conqueror: and the story ran that Cyrus, having learned from Daniel the prophecies of the book of Isaiah (xliv. 28) concerning him, felt constrained, in recognition of their fulfilment, to pronounce a Decree of restoration for the people of Jehovah.

By a misapprehension of a totally different character, Cyrus' action toward the Jewish community in Babylon has in modern times been thought to have been dictated by purely strategic motives. It has been supposed that he restored the Jews to Jerusalem, in order to strengthen his frontier on the south-west

by a garrison of men devoted to his cause by the strongest ties of gratitude.

That Cyrus may have been under special obligations to the Jews, whose prophets had heralded his advance against Babylon, is very probable. But the subsequent course of Jewish history quite forbids us to suppose that the restoration of the Jews was in any way connected with the military defences of the empire. It is equally clear both from Ezra iv. and from Neh. i., ii., that the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem was not at first contemplated by the Persian rulers as necessary, or even as desirable.

The Decree of Cyrus was universal in application to communities that had suffered forcible 'deportation' under Babylonian kings. It was religious in character. The restoration of captives to their homes was incomplete without the restoration of the images and the rebuilding of shrines. The propitiation of the offended deities all over the kingdom was to be secured by the conqueror's first edict.

The Jews received permission to return, but it was with the express command to rebuild the famous sanctuary of Jehovah at Jerusalem. The religious purpose of the Decree, if further proof were needed, is shown both by the action of the Jews on their return, and by the large proportion of the priests who took part in it.

ii. *The Return from Babylon.* The first great band of Jews who availed themselves of the Decree of Cyrus, was led by Sheshbazzar (Ezra i. 8, v. 14), who is probably the same as Zerubbabel (Ezra ii. 2, iii. 8; Zech. iv. 6). The identification is disputed by some who lay stress on the improbability of the two names in Ezra i. 8, ii. 2 and Ezra v. 2, 14 being used in the same context of the same person without any note of explanation. The difficulty would be more serious, if the narrative were given in the form of a homogeneous history. But the narrative is taken from different sources: a second name assumed under altered circumstances offers no insurmountable objection, cf. 2 Kings xxiii. 34, xxiv. 17; Dan. i. 7: one of the kinsmen of Zerubbabel appears in 1 Chron. iii. 18 with the very similarly formed name of Shenazzar. If therefore the Jewish Chronicler

be correct in calling Sheshbazzar a Jewish Prince (Ezra i. 8), there is no reason to doubt that Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel are two names for the same person. Sheshbazzar, which is possibly a contracted form for Shamash-bil-usur (=may Shamesh protect the son), was then the name by which the Jewish Prince was known in Babylon—the name perhaps denoting his royal descent. The objection that Cyrus would not have entrusted a Jew with the work of restoring the Jewish community is an assumption which carries no weight: while the probability that he would have selected for the work a Babylonian Jew of the seed royal, born in the Exile, and bearing a Babylonian name might be pleaded with much greater force.

If the two names represent different persons, we must suppose that Sheshbazzar's position was of a temporary character, and that Zerubbabel, arriving perhaps at the head of a second contingent, received the position of resident governor which we find him occupying in Ezra iii. and v. and in the writings of Haggai and Zechariah.

The official list of those who returned speaks of them as numbering 42,360. Some have supposed this figure to represent only the heads of families; in which case the total must have amounted to a number considerably exceeding 100,000. They settled themselves in Jerusalem and the neighbouring towns and villages.

The first act of the Jews was to rebuild the altar of burnt offering (Ezra iii. 1—6); the next was to lay the foundations of the Temple (Ezra iii. 8—13). The account of the laying of the foundations of the Temple "in the second year of their coming unto the house of God" (Ezra iii. 8), that is, in all probability, in the year 536, has been condemned as unhistorical by some Biblical scholars, on the threefold ground (1) that the beginning of the work on the Temple is apparently assigned in Ezra v. 2 (cf. iv. 24) to the *second* year of the reign of king Darius, (2) that the contemporary prophet Haggai assigns the laying of the foundation of the Temple to the 24th day of the 9th month in the second year of king Darius (Hagg. ii. 18), (3) that the Governors in their letter (Ezra v. 16) speak of the work as having been carried on without interruption.

(1) But there is nothing intrinsically improbable in the account given in Ezra iii. 8—13; nor need there be any contradiction involved in Ezra v. 2. For the expression "began to build" except on the supposition of a very precise use of words, in no way excludes the interpretation that the work of building the Temple, which had ceased for a number of years, was now actively resumed; that hitherto only the foundations had been laid, and that now the building itself was begun. A similar distinction between the work of "laying the foundations" and that of "building" is found in Ezra v. 16. Again, the testimony of the Governors, in the same verse (*v.* 16), is explicit to the effect that Sheshbazzar laid the foundation of the Temple.

(2) With regard to the language of Hagg. ii. 18, it seems to be a mistake to suppose that it fixes the date of the laying of the foundations for the 24th of the 9th month in the 2nd year of Darius—(*a*) That date is the date of the prophet's utterance: hitherto, he says, ever since the foundations of the Temple were laid, the condition of the people had been one of dearth and destitution (*vv.* 15, 17, 19, cf. i. 11): and why? the work on God's house had been neglected; hence His wrath had fallen on the people. Now, however, the work was again set forward, and henceforth, from that 24th day, God's blessing is promised. (*b*) From a previous passage in the same prophet (Hagg. i. 14, 15) we learn that Zerubbabel and Jeshua "came and did work" (i.e. on the house of God), "in the four and twentieth day of the month, in the *sixth* month, in the second year of Darius the king." In Hagg. ii. 1—9, the prophet's comparison between the old and the new building, a comparison made in the *seventh* month of the same year, presupposes some previous work of restoration. (*c*) The supposition that the ceremony of laying the foundation would take place in the 9th, the most inclement month in the year (cf. Ezra x. 9), is in itself most improbable.

(3) Ezra v. 16 "And since that time even until now hath it been in building, and yet it is not completed" cannot fairly be adduced to show that Ezra iii. 8—13 is unhistorical. For the passage assumes that the foundations had been laid by Sheshbazzar, and that he undertook the work at the command of Cyrus

(*v.* 14). As to the Governors' assertion that the work had gone on continuously, we must bear in mind that their information was probably derived from sources hostile to the Jews; and that they would not have taken pains to be minutely accurate. The three points on which they insisted were, first, that the work had been begun by Sheshbazzar in the reign of Cyrus, secondly, that it was still unfinished, thirdly, that it was now being actively pushed on. Whether there had been interruptions or not, was a mere detail.

There is therefore no sufficient reason to call in question the general accuracy of the Compiler's statements in Ezra iii. 8—13.

iii. *The Samaritans.* The work of rebuilding the Temple received a sudden check through the opposition of the Samaritans. The Samaritan community was of very mixed origin, but the two chief elements in it were (*a*) foreign colonists, and (*b*) descendants of Israelites who had escaped the captivity of the Northern Kingdom. (*a*) The foreign colonists are enumerated in detail in Ezra iv. 9, 10. They included three distinct "*strata*" of deportation from other countries. (i.) Sargon, after removing 27,280 inhabitants of Samaria (B.C. 722), is described in 2 Kings xvii. 24 as introducing into the depopulated district men of Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim. (ii.) From Ezra iv. 2 we gather that a second importation of colonists was carried out by Esar-haddon (681—668). (iii.) From Ezra iv. 10 it is probable that a third colonization of Samaritan territory took place in the reign of Assurbanipal (Asnapper) 668—626 B.C.; and the mention of "Babylonians, Susanchites, and Elamites" (*v.* 9) agrees with this supposition. For Assurbanipal crushed a great rebellion in Babylon, and reduced the kingdom of Elam to subjection after a sanguinary war. His captives would be transported to other districts in the empire in accordance with the custom adopted by kings of Babylon. (*b*) At the time of the overthrow of the Northern Kingdom a large number of Israelites remained behind. Their presence is implied in the tradition that the reforms of Hezekiah and Josiah extended far into the territory of the former Northern Kingdom (cf. 2 Kings xxiii. 15 &c.; 2 Chron. xxx. 10, 11, 18, xxxi. 1, xxxiv. 6);

and in the mention of devout Israelites bringing offerings to the site of the ruined Temple of Jerusalem from Shiloh, Sichem, and Samaria (Jer. xli. 5), and maintaining themselves pure from idolatrous corruptions (Ezr. vi. 21).

No doubt the mass of the Northern Tribes who had been suffered to remain in their own homes had become inextricably mixed up with the Assyrian colonists. The religion of Samaria had always been largely tinged with the forms of Phoenician idolatry; and contact with the practices of Assyrian worship conduced to bring about the observance of a religion as different as possible from that which the pious Babylonian Jews cherished.

The Samaritan community may have worshipped Jehovah, but they also "served their graven images" (2 Kings xvii. 41). According to their own account, they had worshipped Jehovah since the days of Esar-haddon (Ezra iv. 1 &c.). On the strength of this bond of union they appeared before the Jews at Jerusalem, and offered to assist them in the work of rebuilding the Temple.

The Jews rejected the offer. Probably they had good reasons to doubt its sincerity. In any case, the sudden alliance with semi-idolatrous neighbours would have quickly obliterated the good impressions of the Captivity, with its strong reaction from idolatry, its ardent Messianic hope, and its devotion to Jehovah as the One God. Had the offer been one merely of political friendship, there would have been no need to reject it. But the Jewish community existed at Jerusalem by virtue of its distinctive religious faith: it was charged with the duty of restoring the worship of Jehovah.

The Decree of Cyrus granted to the Babylonian Jews privileges which could not be extended to others. Something of the old tribal hostility, which was so potent a factor in the disruption of the kingdom after the death of Solomon, may possibly be recognised under the emphatic rejection of the Samaritan offer. But their policy was also one of self-preservation. The Jews would have been rendered powerless by any formal act of amalgamation with neighbours, probably far their superiors both in numbers and strength.

The Samaritans, on finding their offers repelled, shewed them-

selves in their true colours: they became the implacable foes of Jerusalem. The restoration of the Temple would doubtless bring with it the revival of some of the ancient city's prosperity. The attraction of the national shrine would bring Jews from far and wide. The Samaritans perceived in this prospect a menace to their own supremacy in Palestine. They resolved to check, if possible, the progress of the Jews. They complained to the local Persian officials that the Jews were plotting rebellion. Their representations were successful. Perhaps they availed themselves of the confusion which followed the death of Cyrus (529), to inspire the Satrap of Syria with the belief that the activity of the Jewish community was seditious. Perhaps, they found the suspicious temperament of Cambyses himself useful for their purpose. Perhaps, the new king was less inclined than his illustrious father to tolerate so great a variety of worship and to encourage such freedom of religion. Perhaps, the less settled condition of the empire enabled the leaders of the neighbouring tribes forcibly to deprive the Jews of their coveted privileges, and to harass them, with impunity.

Whatever the precise causes may have been, the work of the restoration of the Temple ceased during the latter part of the reign of Cyrus and during the reign of Cambyses and the Pseudo-Smerdis. For nine years and more the Jews were compelled to remain inactive. The first zeal of the returned exiles wore off. Their expectations had been bitterly disappointed. The result was seen in the dejection of some and the open indifference of others.

iv. *The Completion of the Temple.* The accession of Darius (522) to the throne of Persia was the signal for a renewed effort on the part of the Jews. The year 520 was signalised by the energetic appeals of the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, who saw their opportunity in the change of rule (Ezra v. 1; Hag. i. 1 &c.; Zech. i. 1). The people responded with enthusiasm. The work was resumed. The Persian officials in the country west of the Euphrates permitted the building to go on pending an appeal to the king's decision. The royal archives were searched; the Edict of Cyrus was found at Ecbatana (Ezra vi. 2). Darius at

once gave orders that the building should be permitted to go on, and, according to the Jewish account of the royal rescript, that State assistance should be granted both for the construction of the Temple and for the maintenance of the sacrifices (Ezra vi. 8—10). The Temple was completed and dedicated in the 6th year of king Darius (516 B.C.) amidst great rejoicings.

v. *The Silence of Sixty Years.* After the dedication of the Temple there follows a period of nearly 60 years, during which the history of the Jewish community at Jerusalem is almost a complete blank. The generation to which Zerubbabel and Jeshua, Haggai and Zechariah belonged passes completely from our view. When the curtain lifts again, the chief power among the Jews has passed from the family of David. Zerubbabel was dead; and his sons (1 Chron. iii. 19, 20) had not succeeded him. The disappearance of the royal Dynasty and the marked preponderance of the priestly power in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah have given occasion to the theory that Zerubbabel or his sons fell before the intrigues of a jealous priesthood. But there is no ground for supposing that Zerubbabel's governorship was hereditary. On the contrary, it would be the policy of the empire to check any tendency towards the rise of dynastic power in the subject provinces. The governors of Jerusalem who succeeded Zerubbabel were, if we may judge from Mal. i. 8; Ezr. viii. 36; Neh. v. 15, foreigners; and, if foreigners, they would not have sympathised with the policy of religious exclusiveness that had been expressed in the repulse of the Samaritan overtures by Zerubbabel and Jeshua.

There can be no doubt that from some cause or another, which may well have been the reversal of Zerubbabel's action towards neighbouring races, the religious energy of the new community became enfeebled.

The untiring antagonism of the Samaritans was exhibited in the reign of Xerxes (Ezra iv. 6), and the overthrow of the great Persian Armada was a disaster in which the Jewish community must have suffered equally with other portions of the empire.

But there were internal causes at work which will amply account for the general decrepitude of the people at this period.

The priests, into whose hands the chief authority had come, were inclined to relax the stern policy of religious exclusiveness initiated by Zerubbabel and Jeshua. They sought to conciliate the neighbouring peoples. Intermarriage with the heathen was tolerated, the priests themselves were foremost offenders. Advantages, social, commercial, and political, were doubtless thus to be obtained. Faith began to wax cold. The upper classes forgot the brotherhood of their own race. They oppressed the poor, and exacted usurious interest. The distinctive badge of Judaism, the observance of the Sabbath, was neglected. In the matter of offerings for the maintenance of the worship at the Temple, laxness and indifference prevailed. Tithes were withheld from the priests. The supply of wood for the sacrifices was suffered to run short.

vi. *The Mission of Ezra.* In the 7th year of Artaxerxes (458 B.C.) Ezra, the Priest and Scribe, received the royal permission to return from Babylon to Jerusalem, with absolute control in all things religious. Ezra was of the house of Aaron, and was a descendant of the High-priest Seraiah, who met his death at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings xxv. 18). But, what was of still greater importance, Ezra was deeply versed in "the law." Both by rank and by virtue of his preeminent acquaintance with the sacred traditions, he was well fitted—and he may on that account have been selected by his brethren in Babylon—for the task of renovating the religious life of the community in Jerusalem, and of rescuing it from the danger with which it was menaced of being absorbed, through neglect of its distinctive precepts, among "the peoples of the land."

Ezra was the bearer of rich offerings to the Temple of Jerusalem from his fellowcountrymen and from the king himself (viii. 25—27). The king Artaxerxes was also said to have given him a commission in writing, expressed in terms of lavish generosity and amongst other things granting exemption to Jewish priests and Levites from the usual toll or tribute.

The king's object does not appear. He may have wished to return some favour to Jews of Babylon who had rendered him some special service. He may have wished to show his

interest in a province on his extreme western frontier, and to propitiate the Divine Power whose temple was at Jerusalem. If his object was to strengthen the fidelity of the Jews, he may have availed himself of the opportunity which presented itself in Ezra's application for safe conduct.

Ezra's mission was a religious one; but Artaxerxes may have endeavoured to make use of it for the purpose of conciliating the Jews in Babylon or of strengthening his own hold over their countrymen in Jerusalem. In the 7th year of his reign his own throne was endangered by the revolt of Egypt; he could not afford to pass unnoticed any sign of discord in a district of Syria.

Ezra's caravan numbered 1596 men besides a certain number of priests. On mustering them at Ahava, probably a canal or tributary of the Euphrates, he found no Levites in his company; the march was delayed, until he had succeeded in obtaining the support of a considerable contingent of Levites and Nethinim from a Jewish colony settled at Casiphia (viii. 16—20).

The arrival of Ezra and his company in Jerusalem must have kindled the enthusiasm of the religious-minded Jews. It was not long before he made known the true purpose which he had in view. The first opportunity presented itself upon his receiving intelligence of the prevalence among the Jews of intermarriage with the people of the land.

Ezra's open expression of horror at this discovery excited general alarm and excitement. A true forerunner of the Scribes, Ezra put an interpretation upon the Law which was more rigorous than its actual letter required. Any intermarriage with a foreigner was a pollution of "the holy seed," it endangered the existence of the people. A commission of elders was instituted; and a court of enquiry held in all the country of Judea occupied by the Jews. The policy of repudiation of all foreign marriages was approved by the people. A party of opposition no doubt existed. But against the wave of popular feeling only a very few, if any, dared to raise a protest (Ezra x. 15).

This first measure probably typified the uncompromising severity with which Ezra applied himself to the promotion of religious reform, and with which in particular he opposed any policy of alliance with the people of the land. Unfortunately his Memoirs break off abruptly at this point. The narrative is resumed with an extract of the Memoirs of Nehemiah relating to events that occurred at least 12 years later (445).

What had taken place during this interval, we have no means of deciding with any certainty. We are indeed left more or less to conjecture. But the nature of our conjecture will depend upon the explanation of the Episode in Ezra iv. 7—23, and of the description of Jerusalem and of Jewish affairs in Nehemiah's Memoirs. From these sources we deduce the following facts: (1) That not long before 445 B.C. the walls of Jerusalem had been dismantled, and her gates burned (see note on Neh. i. 3); (2) that the Samaritans and their allies had bitterly opposed the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, and had exerted themselves with success to cause the project to be stopped (Ezra iv. 7—23); (3) that the restoration and dedication of the walls were carried out by the energy of Nehemiah, the new governor; (4) that Ezra, who then apparently held no official position, is only mentioned in connexion with the reading of the Law, the celebration of the Feast of Tables, and the religious procession at the dedication of the walls; (5) that not until this juncture, twelve years after his own expedition, was Ezra able to give the people instruction upon the requirements of the Law.

It has been customary to suppose that Ezra's comparative obscurity in the period of Nehemiah's governorship was owing to the failure which had attended the excessive severity of his efforts for a religious reform. The policy of repudiating the mixed marriages had raised up vehement hostility against him. The dominant priestly aristocracy were supported by the malcontents outside the walls. He was powerless to carry out the work which he had wished to accomplish. For 12 years his opponents in Jerusalem made common cause with the Samaritans, who would join in alliance on condition of no

attempt being made to fortify Jerusalem and restore her to independence.

According to another view Ezra, having accomplished the abolition of mixed marriages and certain other reforms no record of which has been preserved, left the city; whether of his own accord, or under compulsion from his enemies, may pass undetermined. During his absence the evils which he had striven to check once more took root among the people. The work had to be done over again during the governorship of Nehemiah. Ezra returned in time to take part in the Dedication of the Walls and in the religious reforms which commenced with the reading of the Law.

A combination of these two hypotheses presents a great degree of likelihood. Ezra's success was at first complete. He obtained the popular assent to the measures he first proposed. But he needed to make sure of the independence of his people, and undertook the fortification of the city and the restoration of the walls. Then came a sudden calamity. Ezra's foes within the walls made common cause with the neighbouring races whom his policy had bitterly incensed. It was the time of the repression of the great Egyptian rebellion (455 B.C.). On the ground of their recent fortifications the Jews were accused by their foes, the Samaritans, of harbouring mutinous designs. The king had granted Ezra no such powers. Full of suspicion he stopped the work (Ezra iv. 17—23).

Jerusalem was handed over to the mercy of her enemies, who made the Jews to cease by force and power (Ezra iv. 23); her walls were razed to the ground; and those who like Ezra had been foremost champions of Jewish liberty were expelled from their homes. This was the condition of things at the time of Nehemiah's arrival. The recent destruction of the city defences, and the state of dejection into which the loyal citizens had been thrown, receive from this theory a complete explanation. What must have added to the humiliation of the catastrophe, was the consciousness that it had been partly brought about by disloyal Jews.

This hypothesis may in some measure account for the fact

that Ezra's name does not appear in the description of the rebuilding of the walls, and only comes into prominence at their Dedication and at the reading of the Law.

vii. *The Governorship of Nehemiah.* The arrival of Nehemiah entrusted with a special commission from the Persian king put a new complexion upon affairs. The Memoirs of Nehemiah show him to have been a man of strong feeling, resolute perseverance and great energy. He was a man whose character would easily have excited the respect and the sympathy of the court at Susa. He had evidently won the affection of Artaxerxes.

In reply to his favourite cupbearer's request the king granted him permission to proceed to Jerusalem as Governor and to rebuild the walls of the city. He further provided him with a body-guard of Persian troops, and with letters of introduction to the Satraps and other officials on the W. of the Euphrates.

All the energy and resolution of Nehemiah were needed to carry the proposed task to a satisfactory completion. He was vehemently opposed by the Samaritans, who doubtless felt that a last effort must be made to prevent a fortified Jerusalem from overshadowing every rival town in Palestine. Threats of force, hints of royal displeasure, and treacherous overtures, alike failed to divert Nehemiah from his purpose. They only succeeded in revealing to him how seriously disaffection prevailed within the city, and how few shared to the full that stricter view of the Jewish religion, which he, in common with Ezra, deemed to be required of every sincere worshipper of Jehovah.

Appealing to the patriotism of his countrymen, he vehemently pressed on the work. In the extraordinarily short space of 52 days the wall was completed. The whole population had been engaged upon it night and day. The work of restoration was systematically distributed among the chief families and guilds. The excellence of this organization, the ardour of the people for the restoration of their defences, coupled with the fact that in all probability the walls were in many places only partially in need of repair, will account for the rapidity with which the work was done. But it is an event in history,

which may be ranked with the building of the Long Walls of Athens, as an instance of patriotic fervour and universal cooperation. Its importance was recognised by the solemn service of Dedication (Neh. xii. 27).

The walls were no sooner restored, than Nehemiah turned his attention to other matters, in which reform was urgently needed. The work on the wall had indeed brought some evils prominently into view (Neh. v.).

Nehemiah attempted to redress the distress, which arose from the oppression of the poor by their more wealthy brethren. The Persian tribute was felt as a great burden by the labouring class. Many were compelled to borrow in order to pay it. They borrowed from their own wealthier countrymen, who exacted an extortionate interest, and, in default of payment, seized the little holdings, or took as slaves the children of their debtors.

The seriousness of the crisis is reflected in the measures by which Nehemiah attempted to restore the national equilibrium. He (1) abolished usury between Jew and Jew (Neh. v. 10), and (2) obtained from the wealthy money-lenders an engagement to restore the mortgaged property which had changed hands (*v.* 11).

In order to obtain a greater degree of stability and confidence within the city walls, he took measures to provide for an increased number of residents (Neh. vii. 4, 5, xi. 1, 2).

But even more important were the steps Nehemiah seems to have taken—not probably without the advice and assistance of Ezra—to establish the national life of the Jews upon the basis of *the written Law.* Before that time, if we may judge from the complete ignorance of the *priestly* Law among the people generally (Neh. viii. 9, 13—17), its enactments could only have been known by a defective oral tradition. So far as it had existed in writing, it must have been held in the possession of the priests[1].

The importance then of the religious reform initiated by Nehemiah and Ezra lay in the removal of "the law" from the exclusive possession of the priest. Its publication put an end to what had been a priestly monopoly. The requirements of "the law" were now placed within the reach of every pious

[1] The people's acquaintance with the contents of the Deuteronomic legislation is of course assumed in this paragraph, and need only here be referred to in order to prevent possible misunderstanding.

Jew. The open reading of "the book of the law" was a new departure. It marked the beginning of a new dispensation.

It denoted not merely a reverence for the sacred traditions of the past, but the erection of a new centre of national life. "The book of the law" could be a protection against idolatry, a standard of social life and religious doctrine, as well to the Jew of the Dispersion as to the Jew at Jerusalem.

The Covenant to which Nehemiah and the heads of the people set their seal in recognition of the obligatory character of the Law that Ezra had read to his countrymen, was decisive for the future of the nation.

It determined finally the preeminence of "the Law." It set on foot the system which has enabled the Jewish race to maintain themselves separate and distinct in the midst of other races, and to outlive every imaginable disaster. The policy of Ezra and Nehemiah was the triumph of "Judaism."

Besides the general observance of the Law, the obligations to which the people now bound themselves to submit, included (*a*) the prohibition of marriage with foreigners, (*b*) the strict observance of the Sabbath, (*c*) the observance of the Sabbatical year and its remission of debt, (*d*) the payment of a tax of $\frac{1}{3}$ shekel to defray the expenses of the Temple worship, (*e*) the payment of tithes and firstfruits to the Levites (Neh. x.).

viii. *Nehemiah's Second Visit to Jerusalem* 432 B.C. After a period of rule which, according to some, lasted for 12 years (Neh. v. 14), Nehemiah had returned to the Persian Court. In his absence the old abuses and irregularities quickly revived. He was forced to visit Jerusalem once again during the lifetime of Artaxerxes (Neh. xiii. 6). Vigorous measures were once again necessary. He found that the policy of foreign alliances had been renewed. Eliashib, the High-priest, had allied himself closely with the Ammonite, Tobiah, and had assigned to him a chamber in the precincts of the Temple itself.

The Jews had once more begun to contract mixed marriages. Now, as at the time when Ezra returned to Jerusalem, the priests were prominent offenders. The High-priest's own grandson had married the daughter of Sanballat the Samaritan.

The effects of such laxity were only too apparent. Jewish children had almost lost the use of their native dialect. The sanctity of the Sabbath was forgotten in the interest of trade with foreigners. Nehemiah made no attempt to conceal the vehemence of his indignation.

The closing words of his Memoirs describe the summary measures he took to purify the holy city.

The strange sentence of self-congratulation with which he sums up his autobiographical sketch indicates the triple line of internal reform to which he had devoted himself, (1) the separation of the Jews from idolatrous strangers, (2) the systematisation of the religious service at the Temple, (3) the adequate provision for the maintenance of the priests and Levites.

§ 7. *Antiquities.*

i. *The Persian Government.*

(*a*) The King. The Persian king possessed absolute power. Nothing is commoner in the inscriptions of Persian kings than the assertion of their supreme dominion over all the world. "King of countries" is one of their favourite appellations. The language of the decree of Cyrus in Ezra i. 2, "all the kingdoms of the earth &c.," though expressed in the Hebrew form, is quite in keeping with the style of their proclamations. The Persian monarch was 'The King,' 'The Great King;' he assumed also other titles, such as 'King of Babylon, King of Sumir and Accad.' The title therefore, 'King of Babylon,' which we find in Ezra v. 13, Neh. xiii. 6, is strictly accurate. "Evidently the title 'King of Babel' [=Babylon] had somewhat the same meaning to the inhabitants of Western Asia after the time of Nebuchadnezzar as the epithet 'Roman emperor' had for the nations of the Middle Ages. It was not until the Persian Empire broke up, and during the period of Greek domination, that the title 'King of Persia' became current even in Western Asia." (Schrader's Cuneiform Inscriptions and the O.T. vol. ii. 67, Eng. Trans.) The expression therefore "Darius the Persian" in Neh. xii. 22 was used by one who was writing after the collapse of the Persian Empire.

The title "King of Assyria" is possibly a Hebrew variation of the "King of Babylon," having the same meaning with reference to the Persian monarch.

The Persian Empire was enormous in extent. It included Afghanistan on the E., and Asia Minor on the W.; to the N. it reached as far as the Caucasus; on the S. it included Egypt among its provinces, and was washed by the Indian Ocean.

The royal capitals of the Persian Empire were Persepolis, in Persia (not mentioned in Scripture), Babylon, in the valley of the Euphrates, Susa or Shushan in Susiana or Elam (Neh. ii. 1), and Ecbatana or Achmetha, in Media (Ezra vi. 2).

The whole time (530—334 B.C.) that Judea was a subject-province to the Persian Empire the reigning dynasty was that of the Achaemenidae. Five of its kings are alluded to in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

*1. Cyrus, 559 (Capture of Babylon, 538—529). Cf. Ezra i. 1, &c.
2. Cambyses, 529—522.
3. Pseudo-Smerdis (Bardiya), 522—521, not mentioned in Scripture.
*4. Darius I., the son of Hystaspes, 521—485. Cf. Ezra iv. 5, 24, v. 6, 7, vi. 1, &c.
*5. Xerxes I. = Ahasuerus, 485---465. Cf. Ezra iv. 6.
*6. Artaxerxes I. Longimanus 465—424. Cf. Ezra vii. 1, &c.; Neh. ii. 1, &c.
7. Xerxes II., reigned two months.
8. Sogdianus, reigned seven months.
9. Darius II. Nothus, 423—405.
10. Artaxerxes II. Mnemon, 405—358.
11. Artaxerxes III., Ochus, 358—337.
12. Arses, 337—335.
*13. Darius III. Codomannus, 335—331. Cf. Neh. xii. 22.

(*b*) The Council. The king was assisted in the task of government by a Council of Seven, referred to in Ezra vii. 14. Cf. Esth. i. 14.

* Denotes mentioned in Scripture.

(*c*) The Satraps. Under Darius Hystaspes the Persian Empire was divided into great provinces, over which were placed "Satraps." More than 20 of these satrapies were established. The majority of the Satraps were members of the reigning family, or its attached adherents.

Each Satrap was in the position of a vassal king. His province paid a fixed sum as a tribute to "the great king;" and out of the central treasury he himself, his staff of officials, and his army received payment. The power of the Satraps was checked in two ways. (1) To the staff of each Satrap was attached an official scribe, whose duty it was to remit to "the great king" a report of the administration in the satrapy. (2) The command of a sufficient number of troops to maintain order was vested in each Satrap. But the imperial armies were commanded by generals appointed by the king.

The word "Satrap" appears in its Hebrew transliterated form in Ezra viii. 36, and in Esth. iii. 12, viii. 9, ix. 3.

The Satrap of the province W. of the Euphrates in the reign of Darius I., seems to have been Tattenai, "the governor beyond the river" (Ezra v. 6, vi. 6). Cf. Neh. ii. 7.

According to one conjecture, Rehum "the chancellor" (Ezra iv. 8), was the royal official scribe attached to the satrapy in which Judea was included.

(*d*) Governors. Beneath the Satraps were the governors of districts, or smaller provinces. Each satrapy was probably divided up into districts, or petty provinces, of which the governors were called Pekhahs. The Satrap resembled the modern Pasha, the Pekhah resembled the modern Mudir.

The Pekhah, whose Persian title seems to have been "the Tirshatha" (Ezra ii. 63; Neh. vii. 65, 70, viii. 9), was appointed by the king, as appears from the instances of Zerubbabel (Ezra v. 14; Hag. i. 1, 14) and Nehemiah (Neh. v. 14). The king seems to have supplied the Pekhahs with troops to serve as a body-guard (Neh. ii. 9).

The Pekhah administered justice in a rough patriarchal fashion. He was probably held responsible to the Satrap for the amount of the tribute at which his district was assessed. In the exaction

of the tribute he was wont to be tyrannical and rapacious. Nehemiah states that the governors of Jerusalem who preceded him took of the people "bread and wine, besides forty shekels of silver" (Neh. v. 15), probably the daily supply. In addition, it seems to have been customary to make presents to the governor (Mal. i. 8).

Other officers in the Persian Administration, of whom we read in these books, are "the treasurer" (Ezra i. 8), who was what we might call "the privy purse" of the great king; "the keeper of the king's forest" (Neh. ii. 3), an officer, to whose special charge was entrusted the management of the trees and the disposal of the timber in any large forest, of which the wood was a royal monopoly; "the treasurers" (Ezra vii. 21), the financial officers in the staff of the Satrap; "cup-bearers" (Neh. i. 11), or eunuchs in personal attendance upon the king.

(*e*) Tribute. The tribute exacted from each province was collected and remitted to the king by the Satrap (cf. Ezra vi. 8). The amount at which a satrapy was assessed varied considerably. Syria sent 350 talents, or about £100,000 annually to the king. The levying of "the king's tribute" pressed very heavily upon a poor community like that of the Jews (Neh. v. 4).

Besides the tribute in money, there was also tribute in kind, especially in grain (cf. Ezra vii. 22). "Custom" and "toll" (Ezra vii. 25) were exacted upon merchandise, monopolies, and the like. And to the burdens of the central authority should also be probably added those imposed by the local governor and the officials of his staff.

ii. *The Jewish Community.* The chief power rested undoubtedly in the hands of the Pekhah; and the Pekhahs seem generally to have been foreigners (Neh. v. 15), or natives who had been in the king's service (cf. Neh. ii. 19 'Tobiah the servant'). Zerubbabel and Nehemiah were exceptions. It does not appear that Ezra was ever in the position of Pekhah. The task which he was appointed to carry out was connected with the religious, not the civil condition of the Jews (Ezra v 11 ff.). The exceptional powers entrusted to him can only be explained

on the supposition that religious matters had notoriously given rise to apprehensions of civil strife.

The Jews who had returned from Babylon were primarily a religious community. The Temple was the centre of their national life. Accordingly, in internal policy, the High-priest stood at the head of the community, and exerted the chief influence.

The High-priests mentioned in these books are

Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, Ezra i.—vi.
Joiakim, Neh. xii. 10, 26.
Eliashib, Neh. iii. 1, xiii. 4.
Joiada, Neh. xii. 10, 22.
Jonathan or Johanan, Neh. xii. 11, 22.
Jaddua, Neh. xii. 11, 22.

Josephus mentions that Joiakim died just after the reforms of Ezra narrated in Ezra x.; but, as he also assigns Ezra's death to the same date, although Ezra appears in the book of Nehemiah, we cannot put much confidence in the accuracy of the tradition (*Ant.* xi. 5, 6). Josephus (*Ant.* xi. 7. 1) records that Eliashib was succeeded by his son Judas; and that Judas was succeeded by his son John, who slew his own brother, Jesus, in the Temple; and that John was succeeded by his son Jaddua. Of Jaddua he relates the famous legend of the High-priest's meeting with Alexander the Great outside the walls of Jerusalem. According to the Jewish historian, Onias followed Jaddua, *Ant.* xi. 8, 5—7.

The High-priesthood was an hereditary office. There arose therefore a kind of religious dynasty. In the course of time, after the break-up of the Persian Empire, the High-priest became practically a petty Jewish monarch.

He did not possess such supreme authority in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. Ezra does not even mention the High-priest. Nehemiah carried out his reforms relating to firstfruits, tithes, &c. (x. 33) independently, so far as can be seen, of the High-priest; and, as some would suppose from the absence of Eliashib's name in Neh. xii., and the policy attributed to him in Neh. xiii. 4, 28, even acted in direct opposition to the High-priest's wishes.

Local officers, of whose functions we have no definite record, seem to have been appointed, presumably by the Pekhah, to whom they would be held responsible. Two such officers divided between them the administration of Jerusalem (cf. Neh. iii. 9, 12), and we have mention of similar officials in connexion with other districts, cf. Neh. iii. 14, 17. A 'Governor of the castle' is mentioned in Neh. vii. 2.

A council of "Twelve," representing the typical unity of the tribes of Israel, seems to be implied in Ezra ii. 2 and Neh. vii. 7. They perhaps are "the elders of Judah," referred to in Ezra v. 5, vi. 7—14.

But besides these responsible officers, there remains to be considered the important aristocratic body, consisting of "the heads of fathers' houses." Whether they formed a recognised "house of notables" cannot be determined. More probably they assembled together informally, and were recognised as the leaders of their households or clans, and as representatives of special interests and guilds. In every step of internal policy, it would be necessary to make sure of their support. Judging from the lists of the Jews who returned from Babylon (Ezra ii., Neh. vii., xii. 1—9), very many of "the heads of fathers' houses" were of priestly lineage. The oligarchy which formed itself under the presidency of the High-priest was mainly priestly and aristocratic; compare the mention of the priests, Ezra ix. 1; Neh. ii. 16, and the position assigned to them in the public lists. The same body is probably intended by "the princes of the fathers' houses of Israel" (Ezr. viii. 29), and "the princes," *sarim* (Ezra ix. 1, 2, x. 8, 14), must be identified with "the nobles," *hōrim*, of Neh. ii. 16, iv. 19, v. 7, vi. 17, vii. 5, xiii. 17. With the latter are also commonly associated the rulers or deputies, *segānim* (Ezra ix. 2; Neh. ii. 16), who probably occupied subordinate offices under the governor, or held posts of dignity as magistrates and judges. The "rulers" are thus to be distinguished from the "nobles," whose position was hereditary. The two classes seem to be alluded to in the phrase, "the elders of every city and the judges thereof" (Ezra x. 14).

iii. *Social condition of the Jews.*

Under the Persian rule the Jews do not seem to have been severely treated. But at no time during the period of their history, which is related in these books, do they seem to have enjoyed prosperity.

During the first few years after the return from captivity, they suffered from bad harvests (see Haggai ii. 19). From a very early time they were harassed by the hostility of the Samaritans (Ezra iv. 1). Like the rest of the provinces of the Empire, the Jews supplied contingents to the great armies of the Persian kings. Herodotus speaks of 'Syrians of Palestine,' who formed part of the army of Xerxes, and were overwhelmed at Salamis and Platæa. A further conscription both of men and animals (Neh. ix. 37) was probably required from the Jews after these tremendous reverses. The rebellion which greeted Artaxerxes on his succession to the throne, must have entailed fresh sacrifices of men and money upon the impoverished district. The distress of the lower orders was increased by the avarice of the Jewish money-lenders (Neh. v. 1, 5).

The majority of the community seem to have been agriculturists, and to have dwelt in the country. The difficulty was to induce any but the upper classes to take up their abode in the city (cf. Neh. xi. 1, xii. 28, 29).

In the city itself a considerable trade went on. Those of the same industry occupied the same street or bazaar. We have especial mention of "goldsmiths" (Neh. iii. 8, 32), and "perfumers" (Neh. iii. 8), and "merchants" (Neh. iii. 31, 32). And Phoenician merchants from Tyre evidently found a good market at Jerusalem (Neh. xiii. 16).

We read of interest at the rate of 12 per cent. *per annum* being exacted by the Jewish usurers of their own countrymen (Neh. v. 11).

Payments were made either in money or in kind, e.g. corn, wine, oil (Neh. v. 11).

Coined money is first referred to after the Exile. The Persian Daric came into general use in the reign of king Darius. It was a gold coin weighing 130 grs. (See note on Ezra ii. 69.)

See Ridgeway's *Origin of Currency and Weight Standard* (Camb. 1892), chap. x.

iv. *Religious organization among the Jews.*

A. The High-priest. In the Memoirs of Nehemiah we find the title of "the High (literally, "the great") Priest" Neh. iii. 1, 20, xiii. 28. In Ezra vii. 5, Ezra's genealogy is traced back through the descendants of Aaron to Aaron himself, who is called "the chief (literally "the head") priest," an expression that is not found in the Pentateuch.

He is simply called "the priest" in Neh. xiii. 4; and this designation is perhaps implied in Ezra iii. 2, "Jeshua the son of Jozadak and his brethren the priests." The term 'priest' where we should expect 'high-priest' is found also in Ezra ii. 63; Neh. vii. 65 "until there stood up a priest with Urim and Thummim."

The sentence just quoted expresses the inferiority of a High-priest after the Exile as compared with an occupant of the same position before the Exile. What precisely this inferiority consisted in, we cannot now say.

Some have supposed that the expression "ruler of the house of God" is a title of the High-priest (Neh. xi. 11; 1 Chron. ix. 11, and 2 Chron. xxxi. 13), but in all probability it was the name given to a subordinate, cf. Jer. xx. 1, like the "second priest" in 2 Kings xxv. 18.

B. The Priests. Generally throughout these two books the priests are clearly distinguished from the Levites; they represent a superior class, and are named before the 'nobles' and 'rulers' by Nehemiah (Neh. ii. 16), and immediately after 'kings' and 'princes' in Neh. ix. 32, 34.

The distinctive title of 'sons of Aaron' is applied to them in Neh. x. 39, xii. 47.

On the other hand, the expression "the priests the Levites," which occurs so frequently in Deuteronomy (cf. xvii. 9—18, xviii. 1, xxi. 5 &c.) is found in Ezra x. 5, as also in Mal. iii. 3, and 2 Chron. v. 5, xxiii. 18, xxx. 27. And in one passage, Ezra

viii. 20, it is even possible that the name 'Levites' is employed as equivalent to that of 'priests.'

At the time of the return from the Captivity the priests represented a tenth of the whole company, being 4289 in number. They comprised, however, only four families, Jedaiah, Immer, Pashur and Harim (Ezra ii. 36—39). It is a proof of the strictness of the time that, even at that crisis, the representatives of three other families were refused admission to the ranks of the priesthood, because their genealogical descent could not be certified (Ezra ii. 61, 62).

The number of families was increased, partly by later accession, partly by subdivision. In the High-priesthood of Jeshua, and afterwards in that of Joiakim, we find the number has grown to twenty-two (Neh. xii. 1—7, 12—21).

When Ezra arrived at Jerusalem he brought with him two priestly families, the one descended from the line of Eleazar, the other from the line of Ithamar (Ezra viii. 2).

The mention of this latter house is of importance. For, while it is true that the Chronicler speaks of sixteen families belonging to the line of Eleazar and eight to that of Ithamar (1 Chron. xxiv. 1—7), Ezekiel, writing during the Exile, restricted the priesthood to the "sons of Zadok," and apparently only acknowledged the priestly claims of the houses that were descended from one branch of the Eleazar line.

C. The Levites.

(*a*) By comparison with the large number of the priests who returned from the Captivity the number of the Levites is strikingly small. There returned with Zerubbabel 4289 priests, but only seventy-four Levites (Ezra ii. 36, 40; Neh. vii. 43). Ezra, by direct entreaty, with difficulty obtained thirty-eight Levites to accompany him (Ezra viii. 15—19). In the list of those who sojourned in Jerusalem, we find 1192 priests, but only 284 Levites (including singers) (Neh. xi. 10—18).

(*b*) In the oldest portions of these books, e.g. in the lists contained in Ezra ii. and Neh. vii., and in the memoirs of Ezra and Nehemiah, the Levites are carefully distinguished

from "the singers" and "the porters" and "the Nethinim." See Ezra ii. 40—43, 55, x. 23, 24; Neh. vii. 1, 43—46, x. 28, xii. 47, xiii. 5, 10.

(*c*) In other portions, which the Compiler has probably written, we find "the singers" identified with "the Levites" (cf. Ezra iii. 10; Neh. xi. 17, 22, xii. 8, 24, 27). The "porters" are not perhaps expressly identified in these books with "the Levites" (Neh. xiii. 22 is no exception; see note); but in the Books of Chronicles the identification is asserted (e.g. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 9), and it can also be inferred from Neh. xii. 25, where Mattaniah and Bakbukiah, who in xi. 17 figure as "singers," are mentioned among the "porters."

In Chronicles, however, it is clear from such a passage as 1 Chron. xxiii. 3—5 that the writer contemplated other Levites besides the "singers" and the "porters." Possibly in Neh. x. 39 we should understand by "the children of Levi" those Levites who were settled in the rural districts who were neither porters nor singers. Possibly from Neh. xi. 18, 19, compared with Neh. xii. 27—29, we should infer that, though the singers were included among Levites, there were also Levites who were neither "singers" nor "porters;" for Neh. xi. 18, 19 mentions 289 Levites, exclusive of porters, residing in Jerusalem, and Neh. xii. 27—29 suggests that the majority of the singers dwelt outside the walls.

It appears then that at the time of the Return and in the lifetime of Ezra and Nehemiah, there were three inferior orders subordinate to the priests, i.e. (1) Levites, (2) singers and porters, (3) Nethinim; but that, at a later time, the distinction no longer existed which separated Levites from singers and porters.

The question arises how 'Levites' could ever be treated as a separate order from singers and porters. And, in a certain measure, it is answered by the evidence that there were other duties discharged by the assistants of the priests besides those of singers and porters. But this answer only partially meets the objection. For we require to know why the generic name should have been given to a special class of Temple assistants,

and what the reasons were that seem to have deterred this particular class from joining in the Return to Jerusalem.

The difficulty has been recently met by the supposition that the 'Levites' in the lists of Ezra ii. and Neh. vii., and in the Memoirs of Ezra and Nehemiah, were not only Temple assistants (exclusive of singers and porters), but also included the descendants of those numerous priests of the high-places who, having been dispossessed of their dignified local position temporarily by Hezekiah, and more completely by the reforms of Josiah, had been allotted a subordinate position at the central sanctuary.

It should be remembered how in Josiah's reign "the priests of the high-places came not up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but they did eat unleavened bread among their brethren" (2 Kings xxiii. 9). And with this passage we must connect in our minds the testimony of the Prophet Ezekiel, who recognised as the only true members of the priesthood "the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me" (Ezek. xliv. 15; cf. xl. 16, xliii. 19). Referring to those who were not Zadokites and had served at the high-places the same prophet says, "But the Levites that went far from me, when Israel went astray, which went astray from me after their idols, they shall bear their iniquity. Yet they shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having oversight at the gates of the house, and ministering in the house: they shall slay the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister unto them .... Yet will I make them keepers of the charge of the house, for all the service thereof, and for all that shall be done therein" (Ezek. xliv. 10, 11, 13); see also Num. xviii. 23.

Have we not in the descendants of the priests of the high-places a class precisely answering to the order of Levites which we are seeking to identify?

(1) They are inferior to the priests of Jerusalem. They had been prohibited from discharging the sacred office at the Temple. It was not likely that they would be called by the full honorific title of 'priests.'

(2) Occupying an inferior position, in comparison with the hereditary descendants of the priests of Jerusalem, not many of them would volunteer to return to Judea, since their return would only emphasize their humiliation.

(3) Those that did so would have shared the duties of assistants in the Temple worship; but as descendants of those who had locally been of the highest rank they were at first separated from the guilds of "singers" and "porters," which probably represented a lower caste. They were designated by the tribal name "Levites," which in some portions of Scripture is always joined with the name of "priest."

(4) The distinction which was thus drawn between "Levites" and "singers" or "porters" would tend to lose its significance; and, in the days of the Chronicler, it had become completely lost. The term Levite had become the generic title, including the various branches of subordinate Temple duties.

If this hypothesis be correct, it will further explain the prominent position taken by the Levites in the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Those of the "Levites," who, descended from the priests of the high-places, returned from Babylon to Jerusalem, must have been moved by a spirit of sincere devotion and religious conviction. Loss of position they incurred, but this they disregarded, if only they might serve God, though in a humble way, in His chosen sanctuary. Few in numbers, they were picked men, devoted patriots, and keen zealots for the Law. The Levites are conspicuous in their support of Ezra on the occasion of the public reading of the Law (Ezra viii.).

With regard to the duties of the Levites, it should be noted that, according to the Compiler, the Levites are associated with the priests in the work of "killing the Passover" lamb (Ezra vi. 20). In Exod. xii. 6 the lamb is to be slain not by priest or Levite but by the head of each household.

In Neh. viii. 7—9 the Levites are found giving instruction in the Law to the people, a task which in Lev. x. 10, 11 is assigned to the priest.

D. The Singers and Porters. To these subordinate classes of Temple assistants no allusion is made in the Pentateuch. It is clear however that the singers and porters, who returned with Zerubbabel, were the descendants of those who had discharged the same offices in the time of the first Temple. As compared with the 'Levites,' they returned in considerable numbers; 128 singers (Ezra ii. 41; 148 in Neh. vii. 44), 139 porters (Ezra ii. 42; 138 in Neh. vii. 45).

In the writings of the Chronicler they occupy a position of importance which it is difficult to reconcile with the absence of allusion to them in the books of Samuel and Kings. If they had been distinguished from the Levites in the days of Zerubbabel, and of Ezra and Nehemiah, they were included among the Levites by the Chronicler.

The prominence given to the order of singers has led to the conjecture that the Chronicler himself belonged to that body, and naturally singled it out for particular notice.

E. The Nethinim. We read of 392 Nethinim and 'servants of Solomon' returning to Jerusalem with Zerubbabel (Ezra ii. 58; Neh. vii. 60): 220 Nethinim accompanied Ezra (Ezra viii. 20).

The Nethinim are described in Ezra viii. 20 as those "whom David and the princes had given for the service of the Levites;" and "the servants of Solomon" doubtless belonged to the same class. They represented the lowest order of the ministers of the Temple. They seem to have been slaves, 'given' (*nethinim*, cf. *nethunim*, Num. iii. 9; 1 Chron. vi. 48) for the service of the priests.

We have no mention of such a class in the Pentateuch. The Gibeonites, who were condemned to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water" (Jos. ix. 21—27), have often been compared with the Nethinim, in respect both of their origin and of the duties assigned to them.

In the books of Chronicles, the Nethinim are only once mentioned (1 Chron. ix. 2), and are there carefully distinguished from the Levites.

On the other hand, they ranked among the congregation (Neh. x. 28), and shared the privileges of priests and Levites (Ezra

vii. 24). Their special place of residence was on the Ophel mount, in close proximity to the Temple, and over against "the Water-gate" (Neh. iii. 26, 31, xi. 21). They were thus posted near to the exit which communicated with the Virgin's Spring; and if their duties at the Temple at all resembled those of the Gibeonites we can understand why their residence over against the water-gate is thus carefully noted. Similarly their duties may have included the "hewing" and preparation of the wood for the wood-offering, to which Nehemiah alludes (Neh. xiii. 31, cf. x. 34).

Some have seen in the employment of the Nethinim an infraction of the rule laid down in Num. i. 51, iii. 38, forbidding "a stranger," i.e. a non-Levite, to have anything to do with the affairs of the Sanctuary. But our information as to the duties which they discharged is not explicit enough to justify any very decided opinion. However it certainly appears as if the Nethinim had been included in the ministrations of the Temple; and, if so, their employment would be an instance of the way in which the actual conditions of Jewish worship fell short of the ideals which the written codes of law set up.

F. The Scribe. Besides Ezra the scribe (Ezra vii. 6, &c.), we have mention also of Zadok the scribe (Neh. xiii. 13). The Scribe, or Sopher, was a well-known title for a state official (cf. 2 Sam. viii. 17, xx. 25), at a royal court. That a similar official was needed in the Jewish commonwealth may readily be allowed. That Ezra, and after him Zadok, may have held such a position is possible.

The extensive organization of the priests and Levites, the succession of their courses of service, and the accounts which recorded the payment of tithes and offerings for the maintenance of the Temple service, must have entailed a considerable proportion of secretarial and accountant work. In 1 Chron. xxiv. 6 there is mention of such a scribe who was also a Levite.

Tradition has generally connected with Ezra's work as "scribe" the labours of the transcription of the Scriptures. Ezra is treated as the typical scribe. Undoubtedly his work

and influence gave the decisive impulse to the popularization of the Law. But it may be doubted whether Ezra's life as a scribe had any resemblance to that of "the scribes" of a later era.

He had however "set his heart to seek the law of the LORD" (Ezra vii. 10); and this distinguishing characteristic which gave him his influence and his authority for instructing the people (Neh. viii. 1) supplied the ideal for the patient, and too often pedantic, order, whose whole object in life was to "be deliberate in judgement, and raise up many disciples, and make a fence to the Law" (Mishnah, *Pirqe Aboth* 1).

§ 8. *Aramaic Dialect and Hebrew Characters.*

The portions of these books, written by Ezra and Nehemiah themselves, and the section Neh. vii.—x., have a purer, more vigorous, and more independent literary style than those which were added by the Compiler. And, in particular, the Memoirs of Nehemiah, which have suffered less from subsequent revision than the Memoirs of Ezra, have a marked individuality.

In style and idiom they may be compared with the writings of Malachi, who was probably a contemporary of Nehemiah. The decadence in style from the best classical Hebrew is far more conspicuous in the writing of Chronicles a century later.

As might be expected in a period which witnessed the decline of the language and the contact of the Jew with other nations, foreign words began to find their way into the vocabulary: and Aramaisms, i.e. the influence of Syrian dialects, began to infect the idioms as well as the vocabulary.

We find also words of Assyro-Babylonian origin, e.g. Ezra iv. 8, "*iggereth*," a letter; v. 14 *pekhah*, a governor; viii. 27 "*daric*," = Ass. dariku; Neh. ii. 8 "*birah*," a fortress = Ass. biratu: and others of Persian origin, e.g. Ezra i. 8, *gizbar*, a treasurer; ii. 63, *Tirshatha*, governor; viii. 36, *akhashdarpan*, satrap.

A. The Aramaic Dialect.

Certain portions of the book Ezra are written, not in Hebrew, but in the Aramaic dialect. These passages are Ezra iv. 8—vi. 18 and vii. 12—26. They have in all probability been extracted

from an Aramaic chronicle, and have received certain additions from the Compiler of the book.

The same dialect appears in two words of Gen. xxxi. 47, in one verse of Jeremiah (ch. x. 11), and in a considerable section of the Book of Daniel (ii. 4—vii. 28). It is the dialect moreover in which are written the Targums, those Aramaic renderings of the Hebrew Scriptures that were used for purposes of public reading in the synagogues, when Hebrew ceased to be the language of the people.

In order to understand what this Aramaic dialect was, it is necessary to understand that what are called the Semitic languages can be classified into clearly recognizable groups.

According to one very commonly accepted division, the Semitic languages fall into two main branches, the Northern and the Southern.

Omitting the less known dialects, we find the following principal groups in the *Northern* Semitic languages:

1. Assyrian and Babylonian in the East and North-east.
2. Aramaic on the North and North-west.
3. Canaanite or Phoenician, and Hebrew on the West.

The *Southern* groups of Semitic languages are Arabic, South Arabian or Himyaritic, and Ethiopic.

From this analysis it will be seen that the Aramaic dialect was spoken by the northernmost tribes of the Northern Semites, and that it was a sister dialect of Hebrew and Assyrian. It gradually spread southward and eastward, until it became the prevalent dialect, both of Northern Mesopotamia and of the whole country west of the Euphrates, embracing Syria and Palestine. "The Aramaic dialects are divided into two principal groups, the *Eastern* (including the dialects of Mesopotamia and Babylonia, i.e. Syriac, the Aramaic of the Babylonian Talmud, and Mandaitic) and the *Western* (including Biblical Aramaic, as also the dialects of the Jewish Targums, of the Samaritan Targums, of the Christian Palestinian Lectionary, of the Palestinian Talmud, and of the Palmyrene inscriptions)," Bevan's *Daniel*, p. 33.

We have next to enquire what is known of the history of the process by which Hebrew was supplanted by Aramaic. We gather from 2 Kings xviii. 26 that in the year 701 B.C. Aramaic was unknown to the common people of Jerusalem, but that the nobles and courtiers were acquainted with it as the language of diplomacy.

Throughout the Exile, the knowledge of Hebrew was undoubtedly preserved: for the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah (circ. 516), are written in pure Hebrew, and the same may be said of the prophecy of Malachi and the Memoirs of Ezra and Nehemiah, in the century after the return from the Exile (460—430). The fact that in the reign of Artaxerxes a letter to the king was written in Aramaic is expressly recorded as a thing which called for notice even in an Aramaic record (Ezra iv. 7). But the encroachments of Aramaic almost surrounded the Jewish community. Portions of the Samaritan colony had been brought from the regions of Hamath, where Aramaic was the native tongue. The neighbouring dialects were gradually absorbed. One of the results of contracting alliances with other peoples was the gradual extinction of the Hebrew language. This was foreseen by Nehemiah in 432. In the fourth and third centuries B.C. the Hebrews had many of them become bilingual. The Compiler himself after making his extract from an Aramaic record continues in Aramaic, resuming his own characteristic style (see page § 4. c). Greek for a time threatened to dispute the position. But the Aramaic dialect prevailed; and although Hebrew remained as the language of the learned, of the law, of tradition, and of religious literature (cf. Ecclesiasticus, the Book of Enoch, Mishnah, the Book of Jubilees, Psalms of Solomon), the dialect spoken by the Jews in the 1st cent. B.C. was Aramaic.

It should be added that the familiar term Chaldee, popularly applied to Aramaic, is quite incorrect. It is said to have been based upon a misunderstanding of Dan. ii. 4, and to have derived support from the supposition, now universally abandoned by scholars, that the Jews brought this dialect back from Babylon. The Cuneiform Inscriptions have shown that the

people of Babylon spoke in quite a different dialect from that which is called Chaldee.

B. Archaic and Square Hebrew Characters.

The Jews have experienced not only a change of dialect but also a change of alphabet.

The Hebrew characters which are so familiar to us do not possess the forms which the ancient Hebrew letters had.

It is now known that the ancient Hebrew alphabet closely resembled the alphabets of the Canaanites, the Phoenicians, and the Moabites.

The earliest Israelite writing is that of the Inscription found in the Pool of Siloam, which is generally assigned by scholars to the reign of Hezekiah, about the year 700 B.C. The characters of this inscription are very similar to those which are found on the so-called Moabite Stone, in an inscription written by command of Mesa, king of Moab, about the year 890 B.C.: they are also very similar to the characters found in Phoenician inscriptions, on coins and gems.

The ancient Hebrew characters, therefore, were of the same general type as the characters employed by the neighbouring nations. They are found on the coins of the Maccabees in the 2nd cent. B.C. The latest forms of this ancient Hebrew character are preserved to us in the Samaritan version of the Pentateuch, in which the archaic letters are retained, although by comparison with the Hebrew inscriptions their shape is much modified.

But some time before the Christian era a change of alphabet gradually took place. A simpler and less intricate type of letter began to find favour. The familiar *square* characters, which have more resemblance to the Palmyrene than to the Phoenician characters, became universally adopted by the Jews. The process was one of gradual change. The archaic letters were first simplified, and more and more approached the square character.

If we are asked when exactly the square Hebrew forms finally supplanted the old Hebrew characters, we cannot from want

of sufficient evidence give any very decided answer. The earliest known specimen of *square* Hebrew writing is the inscription of *Arak el emir*, of the date 176 B.C., which is a strange combination of the old Hebrew and the square Hebrew characters, and probably illustrates the transitionary stage. From Matt. v. 18 it is evident that, in our Lord's time, the square characters were in general use. The latest known use of the *ancient* Hebrew characters is found on "the Maccabee and other Jewish coins." It has sometimes been asserted that the Maccabee Princes only employed these characters out of reverence for bygone times. But it is surely not probable that they would have used characters which could not be read by all. Their use of the old letters is rather evidence that the new type had not yet become generally adopted by conservative Jews. The utmost that can be said with confidence is that the ancient Hebrew began to be disused by the Jews before the commencement of our era (see W. Wright's *Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages*, p. 39); but that, before that time, all Hebrew writing had been in some form of the Archaic Script. Not only the Israelites, but the Moabites, the Phoenicians, the Carthaginians seem to have used varieties of the same ancient Semitic alphabet; and its usage continued into post-Christian times.

For the Jewish tradition that the Jews brought the square letters from Babylon there is no foundation whatever. The legend that Ezra invented them is equally worthless, and only illustrates the tendency of Jewish tradition to ascribe to the influence of Ezra whatever took place among the Jews in the interval between the Exile and the Maccabean age.

The mention in Ezra iv. 8 of Syriac or rather Aramaic characters would be sufficient to show that the characters used were not the native Jewish style of writing but that of the foreign officials. The inference to be drawn from the passage is that the old Hebrew alphabet was the one in general use among the Jews at the time the Aramaic Chronicle was composed. What the Aramaic character spoken of in Ezra iv. 8 was we can only conjecture. It was very possibly the Aramaic type of alphabet

"our knowledge of which commences with some Assyrian weights, which go back as far as the seventh or eighth century before our era. There are also extant some gems and seals of nearly the same age. Among the inscriptions may be mentioned that recently discovered by Prof. Euting at Taimā, clearly belonging to the Persian period, say from the sixth to the fourth century B.C." (W. Wright, *Comp. Gram.*, p. 39.)

Mention has already been made of the archaic Hebrew characters of the Samaritan Pentateuch. When indeed the Samaritans received the Pentateuch has been disputed. But most scholars are disposed to think that at the time when the Samaritans erected a temple on Mt. Gerizim and established there a ritual to rival that of Jerusalem they also recognized the Canonical character of the Torah. This probably occurred when Nehemiah ejected the grandson of the High-priest; for, according to Josephus, this renegade of the name of Manasseh was appointed High-priest of the Samaritans.

According to the Book of Nehemiah the date of this event was 432 B.C.; according to Josephus, it was a century later.

At so early a date as the 4th or 5th century B.C. there is no reason to suppose that the Jews had begun to give up their old method of writing. The Samaritan Pentateuch, according to the best orientalists, represents the latest form of the old Semitic characters, possibly that in use shortly before the Christian era. In other words its transcription has preserved one of the latest modifications of the old alphabet in use before the square letters were adopted[1]. The strange thing is that the Samaritans were more conservative in their transcription of the sacred text than the Jews. But the reason of this is to be found in the spread of the Jewish synagogues, and in the difficulty in finding those who could read the old characters. When the Jews decided to alter the characters found in the synagogue rolls is not known. Nor do we know whether the alteration was due to an authoritative resolution, or to a gradual but spontaneous change of usage.

[1] The Samaritan MSS. are hardly earlier than the 12th or 13th cent. A.D.

§ 9. *Place in the Canon.*

In our English Bibles Ezra and Nehemiah follow the books of Chronicles, whose historical narrative they continue (cf. Ezra i. 1—3 with 2 Chron. xxxvi. 22, 23). In the Hebrew Bible Ezra and Nehemiah stand immediately before Chronicles.

The Hebrew Canon of Scripture is divided into three main groups: (I) the Law (*Torah*), (II) the Prophets (*Nebiim*), (III) the Writings (*Kethubim*).

In the third group, that of the Writings, the books in an ordinary Hebrew Bible are arranged in the following order, Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles.

The position assigned to Ezra and Nehemiah before Chronicles is probably due to Ezra and Nehemiah having been set apart by the Jewish scribes as authoritative Scripture before Chronicles obtained that recognition. There is reason to suppose that Chronicles, beginning with the genealogy of the Patriarchs and concluding with the Captivity of Babylon, was added as a kind of appendix to the whole Jewish Scriptures. From the reference in Matt. xxiii. 35 it has been conjectured that Chronicles, in our Lord's time, occupied the last place in the Hebrew Canon of Scripture.

The Wisdom of Sirach, or Ecclesiasticus, which was written about 180 B.C., contains, in its praise of the famous men, an allusion to the deeds of Nehemiah, "whose renown is great, who raised up for us the walls that were fallen, and set up the gates and the bars, and raised up our ruins again" (xlix. 13).

In the same context there is a mention of Zerubbabel and Jeshua (vers. 11, 12) which seems to be based on the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah; and the complete omission of Ezra's name is very noteworthy.

The books were probably well known at the beginning of the 2nd cent. B.C.; but it is not probable that they came to be regarded as Scripture until after the Maccabean Revolt. The recognition of the third group, the Kethubim, cannot be shown to have become general until the second half of the 2nd cent. B.C. (cf. *Ecclus. Prolog.*).

No reference to either Ezra or Nehemiah is found in the writings of the New Testament. Philo, however, quotes from Ezra viii. 2 (*De Confus. Ling.* § 28); Josephus makes use of Ezra and Nehemiah in his history (*Ant.* XI. 1—5), and undoubtedly reckoned their contents among the Holy Writings (*Contr. Ap.* c. 8). No objection was ever raised by the Jewish Rabbis against the Canonicity of Ezra and Nehemiah.

§ 10. *Relation to other literature.*

(*a*) 1 Esdras. The Third Book of Ezra, or as it is called in the English Apocrypha, the 1st Book of Esdras, consists almost entirely of extracts from Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah. Thus chapters i. and ii. are taken word for word from 2 Chron. xxxv. 1—xxxvi. 21; Ezra i. and iv. 7—21; chapters v. 7—ix. 55 are compiled from Ezra ii.—iv. 5, v.—x., and Neh. vii. 73—viii. 13.

There remains but one portion, chap. iii. 1—v. 6, which is not directly borrowed from Canonical Scripture; and this contains a legend describing how Zerubbabel as a page at the Court of Darius obtained great honour and received permission to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple. The book possesses therefore no independent historical value. It merely assists the scholar to arrive at a better knowledge of the text, wherever it supplies a parallel Greek version of Canonical Scripture.

The so-called Second (or Fourth) Book of Esdras is an Apocalypse written at the close of the 1st cent. A.D.

(*b*) Haggai, Zechariah (i.—viii.), Malachi. The writings of these prophets should be carefully studied *pari passu* with the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Haggai and Zechariah stimulated the people to the work of rebuilding the Temple (Ezra v. 1, 2), and it is to this epoch that their prophecies relate.

The prophecy of Malachi, in all probability, dates from the age of Nehemiah, and is ascribed by some to the interval between his first and second visit. According to others he wrote shortly before the mission of Nehemiah, since the writer seems to suppose that "the governor" (Mal. i. 8) is not a Jew. The

social condition of the people is evidently the same as that described in Ezra vii.—x. and in Nehemiah.

(*c*) Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, Bk xi. 1—5. The narrative of the Jewish historian, in dealing with the period covered by these two books, is confused and unsatisfactory. It is derived principally from the Greek (First) Book of Esdras, which he partially supplements with information gleaned from the Canonical Book and from legend.

Zerubbabel, according to Josephus, twice leads a band of his countrymen to Jerusalem, once in obedience to the decree of Cyrus (§ 1), and a second time in the reign of Darius as a reward for the triumph of his wisdom (as 1 Esdr. iii. 1—v. 6). In the one instance the Jews are 42,462 in number, in the other 4,628,000. In both instances the sacred vessels are intrusted to the charge of Zerubbabel.

Josephus, identifying Artaxerxes with Cambyses, relates the contents of Ezra iv. 7—23 as intervening between the reigns of Cyrus and Darius.

Darius according to Josephus had, when still a private individual, made a vow that he would restore the sacred vessels to the Temple of Jerusalem: he was also a personal friend of Zerubbabel's.

The building of the Temple is first stated to have been accomplished rapidly: but when, after mentioning the Samaritan opposition, Josephus says it was finished in seven years, he has clearly misunderstood the "second year" in Ezra iii. 8, referring it to the reign of Darius instead of to the reign of Cyrus.

Darius is succeeded by his son Xerxes (the Artaxerxes of Ezra and Nehemiah), who is a personal friend of Ezra's. Ezra's mission to Jerusalem, his crusade against mixed marriages, and his public reading of the Law are rapidly described; Josephus then mentions his death at a good old age, occurring at about the same time as the death of the High-priest Joiakim.

Nehemiah's mission is ascribed to the 25th year of Xerxes' reign instead of the 20th, as in Neh. ii. 1; the building of the wall occupies 2 years and 4 months instead of 52 days (Neh. vi. 15). Its completion is celebrated by an eight days' feast; but

there is no mention of the solemn dedication described in Neh. xii.; and scarcely any allusion either to the reforms carried out by Nehemiah (Neh. v.—x.) or to his second visit mentioned in Neh. xiii. It is merely stated that Nehemiah urged the priests and Levites to reside in Jerusalem, that he commanded the people in the country to bring their tithes to Jerusalem, and that he died an old man.

(*d*) Jewish tradition. Many legends arose round the name of Ezra. According to the Apocryphal Second (or Fourth) Book of Esdras, Ezra was miraculously inspired to restore the books of Scripture which had perished when Jerusalem was pillaged by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar (2 Esdr. xiv.). According to late Hebrew tradition Ezra is said to have written the books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles. He is moreover identified with the prophet Malachi. He is credited with having formed the Canon of Hebrew Scripture, with introducing the square Hebrew characters, and with inventing the vowel-points and the Massorah. He is said to have established an important national council, called the Great Synagogue, over which he presided. His grave was said to be by the banks of the Tigris; but Josephus says he died at Jerusalem. But for none of these legends is there any trustworthy evidence. His name impersonates the age of "Sopherism" or the influence of the scribes. Whatsoever was ascribed to the interval between Nehemiah and the Maccabees is associated in Jewish tradition with Ezra.

Legend has been less busy with Nehemiah. In the spurious epistles prefixed to the 2nd Book of Maccabees two legends respecting Nehemiah are preserved. In the one (2 Macc. ii. 13) he is said to have "founded a library" and to have collected the books that told about "the kings and the prophets, the words of David, and the letters of kings concerning dedicatory gifts." In the other (2 Macc. i. 18—36) he figures in a story which told how, when Jerusalem was taken by the Chaldeans, the holy fire from the altar had been hidden by Jeremiah in a well, and how, by its means, Nehemiah could indicate the spot where the Temple should be built. In both legends he is treated as a

representative founder of the Judaism of which the letter of Scripture and the Temple of Jerusalem were the symbols.

§ 11. *Importance of Ezra and Nehemiah.*

The importance of the books Ezra and Nehemiah among the Scriptures of the Old Testament Canon has often been overlooked. Their pages indeed record no mighty miracle, no inspiring prophecy, no vision, no heroic feat of arms. Their narrative contains many uninteresting details, and chronicles many disappointments. And yet few books offer such a variety of interest or embrace material of such deep significance.

So far as their composition is concerned, we find here, what is scarcely to be found elsewhere in the narratives of the Old Testament, large portions of undoubtedly contemporary writing in the extracts from the autobiographical memoirs of Ezra and Nehemiah, and from the official documents.

So far as the history of the Jewish people narrated in these books is concerned, it belongs to the epoch that opens with Cyrus and closes with Alexander the Great; and it describes the foundation of the system of Judaism at a time when the influence of the Aryan races first made itself felt upon the life and culture of the Israelite people.

So far as their religious significance is concerned, the teaching of these books is of especial value in reference to (1) The Faithfulness of the Divine Promise, (2) The Discipline of Disappointment, (3) The Hallowing of Common Life, (4) The Preparation for the Messianic Age.

1) The book of Ezra opens with an appeal to the words of Jeremiah (Ezra i. 1; cf. Jer. xxv. 12, xxix. 10). The words of prophecy had been fulfilled in judgement (Neh. ix. 30). This last narrative in the Hebrew Canon describes their fulfilment in mercy. The promise of deliverance and restoration is slowly realised in the Return, in the Building of the Temple, and in the Restoration of the City Walls. The signal accomplishment of the word of Promise is a pledge for the future consummation of the nation's hope.

(2) One expectation after another is frustrated. Through the favour of foreign princes alone, not through Israel's victories, is the Return from the Captivity brought about. The enthusiasm of the Return is damped by disaster, by opposition, by want, and by discontent. Even after the erection of the sanctuary, the hostility of the heathen is not averted, nor the sincerity of the Jewish community absolutely maintained. Fifty-eight years intervene before the arrival of Ezra; and then the necessity of internal purification is only tardily recognised. Yet twelve more years passed before the city walls protected the independence of the people and their Temple. But neither reforms nor fortifications could hallow the people or insure the fidelity even of their priests.

The recovery of the land, the building of the Temple, the isolation of the people, by the prohibition of inter-marriage with the heathen and by the erection of stout ramparts, failed to bring about any general consciousness of their high calling. There yet remained the ascendency of "the Law" to give the crowning example of the failure of material hopes.

(3) Whatsoever there is of achievement in the central story of these books is due to the devotion and cooperation of citizen life. Unaided by special revelation or by miraculous agency, Ezra and Nehemiah are conspicuous for their simple trust in God and for their witness of life spent in constant prayerful communion with the Unseen. The motto of such success as these books record might be written in the words of the great prophet who wrought in the first generation of the post-Exilic era, "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts" (Zech. iv. 6).

(4) These books contain no reference to the Messianic hope of the Jewish nation. And yet the need of some higher Revelation is found expressed in the language of a formal list of those who returned from the Captivity (Ezra ii. 63). We see the chief place in the People passing from the Son of David to the High-priest: we see the influence of the Scribe dawning upon the history of the race. Prophecy is disappearing and giving place

to the absolute reign of the written "Law." The Spirit of Divine Revelation speaks to us in this last chapter of history in the Canon of the Old Testament. The picture of the foundation of Judaism shows the connexion of the new era with the past. The strangely unfinished story (Neh. xiii.) symbolizes the period of transition from which it emanates. The Hebrew Scriptures would have been incomplete, their witness unintelligible, without Ezra and Nehemiah. Legalism is, as it were, left enthroned upon the ruins of the Monarchy. The Sovereignty of the Law knows no frontiers: the Temple draws worshippers from every land. A new Jewish ascendency with a universal claim begins. Its abuse culminates in the trivialities, the exclusiveness, and the superstition of "the scribes and Pharisees." Its spiritual power inspires the Maccabees, it educates Apostles and Evangelists. Its failure and its success were alike necessary to the Divine Dispensation. Ὁ Νόμος παιδαγωγὸς ἡμῶν γέγονεν εἰς Χριστόν.

§ 12. *Bibliography.*

The following books are accessible to all students.

Commentaries: Canon Rawlinson in 'The Speaker's Commentary' (vol. 3) and in 'The Pulpit Commentary': Schultz, edited by Briggs for 'Ezra,' and by Crosby for 'Nehemiah,' in vol. VII of Lange's Commentary; Keil in Clark's Foreign Theolog. Library; Bertheau, edited by Ryssel (Leipzig 1887); and Öttli (Nördlingen 1889) in Zöckler's Series of Commentaries.

Introductions: Prof. Sayce's (Religious Tract Soc.); Prof. Driver's discussion of the books in *Introd. to the Literature of the O. T.* (T. T. Clark, 4th ed. 1892); Rawlinson's '*Ezra and Nehemiah*' in 'Men of the Bible Series[1].'

Minute discussions on the Topography of Jerusalem and on

[1] Besides the books above mentioned, I have made use of the Jewish Commentaries of Rashi and Saadia, Wordsworth's Commentary, and the notes by Neteler (Münster 1877). Of all modern Commentaries, that of Bertheau-Ryssel is the most full and scholarly. I have also consulted the Introductions by Kuenen, Cornill, Wellhausen-Bleek, and Keil; and the recent treatises by Van Hoonacker (Louvain 1890—2).

the Genealogical Lists being out of place in the present Series, the reader is referred on the former subject to the *Palestine Exploration Soc. Quarterly Statements*, the *Transactions of the Society of Biblical Archæology*, the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and the writings of Conder, Wilson, Warren, Guthe, Schick, Socin: on the latter subject to Smend's famous Monograph *Die Listen der Bücher Esr. u. Neh.* (Basel 1881).

CHRONOLOGY.

B.C.

538. Capture of Babylon and Decree of Cyrus.
536. Foundation of the Temple.
529. Cambyses.
522. Pseudo-Smerdis and Darius Hystaspes.
516. Completion of the Temple.
490. Battle of Marathon.
485. Xerxes.
480. Battles of Thermopylae and Salamis.
479. Battles of Plataea and Mycale.
468. Birth of Socrates.
466. Battle of Eurymedon.
465. Artaxerxes I. Longimanus.
460—455. Egyptian Revolt.
458. Ezra's Mission to Jerusalem.
445. Nehemiah appointed Governor.
432. Nehemiah's Second Visit to Jerusalem.
431. First year of Peloponnesian War.
425. Xerxes II. and Sogdianus.
424. Darius II. Nothus.
405. Artaxerxes II. Mnemon.
351—331. Jaddua, High-priest.
336. Darius Codomannus.
332. Conquest of Persian Empire by Alexander the Great.

EZRA.

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the 1
word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be

PART I. THE RETURN UNDER ZERUBBABEL.

Ch. i. 1—4. The Decree of Cyrus.
5—10. The Return under Sheshbazzar.
ii. The Register of the Return.
iii. 1—6. The Dedication of the Altar.
7—10. The Foundation of the Temple.
iv. 1—3. The Rejection of the Samaritans.
4—24. The Opposition, in the days of Cyrus, Xerxes, and Artaxerxes.
v. 1—2. The Voice of the Prophets.
3—17. The Governor's Enquiry.
vi. 1—12. The Reply of King Darius.
13—18. The Completion of the Temple.
19—22. The Celebration of the Passover.

CH. I. 1—4. THE DECREE OF CYRUS.

THE history of the time throws light upon the action of Cyrus, whose Decree gave life to the seemingly lifeless bones of Israel (Ezek. xxxvii.) and restored the scattered flock to their pasture (xxxiv.). Except by his personal attendants, the fall of Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon, had been hailed by all with satisfaction. The priests had been alienated from him by his neglect of the defences of the great temples. The generals and nobles despised a king, who absented himself from his capital and his troops, and entrusted to his son the chief command. The poorer classes had no respect for a weak monarch, who failed to protect them from the invader and only imposed on them heavy tasks of building. Cyrus was welcomed in Babylon as Deliverer and saluted as 'the Great King.' The Jewish colony who, although they had been taught by their prophets to expect Cyrus' ultimate success, could hardly have foreseen so easy a victory, so bloodless a capture of Babylon, as that which the Inscriptions describe, would have been among the most demonstrative in their rejoicing over his success. They saw before them the possibility of the near realization of their hopes.

Cyrus was too shrewd a sovereign to throw away any opportunity of

fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his

cementing together the various elements of his newly conquered empire. He could cheaply earn the affection of many a subject race by gratifying its hopes and removing from Babylon the symbols of its servitude. He gave permission therefore to those of this class resident in the Capital, to take back their gods that had been forcibly removed to Babylon, and to set them up in their former homes. To the Jews he granted corresponding (and, perhaps, in recognition of their special services in his cause, peculiar) privileges. He gave permission to the worshippers of Jehovah to return to their own country, to resume the worship and to rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem. They had no images or gods to carry with them. But the sacred vessels, regarded with deep veneration, which had been carried off from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, were given back once more into the keeping of the priests.

Verses 1—3 (as far as the words 'let him go up') are almost word for word the same as 2 Chron. xxxvi. 22, 23. The very slight differences clearly arise from errors of transcription. We have here (*a*) *ver.* 1, the short form 'Yirm'yah' instead of the longer 'Yirmyahu'—(both of which are found for Jeremiah): (*b*) *ver.* 1 'by the mouth' instead of 'at the mouth': (*c*) *ver.* 3, 'his God be with him' instead of 'the Lord his God be with him'.

The fact, that the book of Ezra opens with the same passage as closes the books of Chronicles, has been differently explained.

(1) On the hypothesis, that Ezra-Nehemiah are a separate composition from the books of Chronicles, it is supposed that the compilers of both works made use of the same written documents.

(2) On the hypothesis, that Ezra-Nehemiah come from the hands of the same compiler as the books of Chronicles, we must suppose (*a*) that there was a time when Chronicles-Ezra-Nehemiah, in some form or another, constituted a single work: (*b*) that Ezra-Nehemiah were detached for the purpose of completing the history of the people, narrated in 2 Kings, by an account of the Return from Captivity and of the foundation of the new Jewish Constitution: (*c*) that afterwards, when the books of Chronicles were added as a sort of historical appendix to the Jewish Canon, they were made to conclude with the opening words of Ezra-Nehemiah. The records of the People thus ended, not with the reminiscence of captivity, but with the announcement of release. Furthermore Chronicles, though placed in the Jewish Canon after Ezra-Nehemiah, thus retained, by means of the concluding verses, a witness to its identity of origin with the books which preceded.

The second hypothesis, for reasons given in the Introd., appears to be the preferable.

1. *Now*] or '*and*'. At first sight a strange word with which to open a book. It implies the resumption or continuance, not the commencement, of a history. The use of it, however, receives explanation from either hypothesis mentioned in the preceding note. Regarding our book as having been compiled with the books of Chronicles, we see the precise usage of the word here by a reference to the context in

kingdom, and *put it* also in writing, saying, Thus saith 2
Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given

which it stood 2 Chron. xxxvi. 22. Reasons of a similar character explain the same word beginning Joshua, Judges, 1 Sam., 1 Kings.

in the first year of Cyrus] i.e. in the same year that Cyrus captured Babylon and became master of the Babylonian Empire. To the Jews and other subject races it would be 'the first year of Cyrus'. This year is generally computed to have been 538 B.C. Cyrus was born about 590 B.C. He ascended the throne of Elam 558, conquered Media 549, Persia about 548, overthrew Crœsus and became king of Lydia 540, captured Babylon 538, died 529. The Jewish 'first year of Cyrus' was therefore about the twentieth of his reign over the Elamites and the tenth of his reign over Persia.

Cyrus king of Persia] The Hebrew pronunciation of the name of the great Persian king is generally supposed to have been 'Kôresh'. There is, however, good reason for preferring 'Kûresh', which corresponds more closely with the Greek 'Kuros' (*κῦρος*), Latin 'Cyrus'. In Persian the name seems to have been 'Kurusch'. The Babylonian Inscriptions speak of him as 'Kurasch'. The name is said to be derived from that of a mythical Persian hero 'Kuru'.

Recent discoveries have shown that Cyrus, prince of Anzan, a province of Elam, became first, probably by rightful succession, King of Elam, and styled himself by this title in his inscriptions. This fact explains how it happened that Susa, the old Capital of Elam, continued to be the seat of the Medo-Persian Empire along with Ecbatana, the Capital of the Median Kingdom.

Cyrus, then, the conqueror and King of Persia, was an Elamite by birth, a Persian by descent. His greatgrandfather Teispes was a Persian. But although he was thus descended from a Persian ancestor, it seems to be a mistake to impute to him the Monotheistic views which characterised Persian Zoroastrianism.

He is called 'the King of Persia', not because he was born a Persian prince, but because the Persian Kingdom was the most important of his conquests.

that the word of the LORD] The Divine purpose. This thought is well illustrated by reference to Ps. cii. 13—22, beginning 'Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion; for it is time to have pity upon her, yea, the set time is come'.

by the mouth of Jeremiah] Literally, '*from the mouth of*'. The word *proceeds* '*from* the mouth'. It is *declared* '*by* the mouth', as in the reading of 2 Chron. xxxvi. 22, the parallel passage. The reference here is to Jeremiah's prophecy of the 70 years, Jer. xxix. 10, 'For thus saith the Lord, After seventy years be accomplished for Babylon, I will visit you and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place', cf. xxv. 11.

It is clear that in the writer's opinion 'the 70 years for Babylon' were completed at the occupation of Babylon by Cyrus. This period of 70 years has been computed in different ways. (1) By some the attempt is made to discover an *exact interval* of 70 years between the

me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me
3 to build him a house at Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah. Who

third year of king Jehoiakim (cf. Dan. i. 1) and the taking of Babylon by Cyrus. (2) By others the term is understood to express an interval of time in *round numbers*, commencing (*a*) either, in the year 605, with the battle of Carchemish, and the supremacy of Babylon, and the reign of Nebuchadnezzar; (*b*) or in the year 598, when the king Jehoiachin and the mass of the population were carried away captive; (*c*) or in the year 587, when the city and Temple of Jerusalem were destroyed. Our verse certainly implies that the period terminated with 'the first year of Cyrus' (538)[1].

might be fulfilled] R. V. **accomplished**, i.e. brought to a conclusion. Referring to the substance of the utterance, touching the 70 years.

The word in the original is different from that in 2 Chron. xxxvi. 21 (R. V. rightly '*fulfil*'), and Jer. xxix. 10, where the R. V. unfortunately renders the same word by *accomplished*. The completion of the thing predicted is here emphasised rather than the fulfilment of the prediction.

the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus] The act of Divine interposition, taking effect in the domain of spirit, of will and desire. Cf. Ex. xxxv. 21. The phrase occurs in a hostile sense, e.g. 1 Chr. v. 26; 2 Chr. xxi. 16; Jer. li. 11; but, as here and ver. 5, with a favourable meaning in Hag. i. 14.

that he made a proclamation] A peculiar phrase in the original, occurring again in x. 7; Neh. viii. 15; 2 Chron. xxx. 5; Ex. xxxvi. 6, meaning literally, 'he caused a voice to pass'. Here used of proclamation by herald.

all his kingdom] i.e. nearly the whole of Western Asia; the kingdoms of Elam, Media, Persia, Lydia and Babylon.

and put it *also in writing*] This is added not so much to express that written copies of the proclamation were forwarded to the various officials of the Empire, as to record the fact, which to the Jew was of so much importance, that the edict, so far from being a Jewish invention, had been written at the command of Cyrus, and was accessible among official papers. (Cf. vi. 2.)

saying] The decree itself would have been written in Persian or Aramaic. The following verses (2—4) contain the substance of the decree translated into Hebrew and adapted to Jewish readers. It is a popular reproduction rather than a literal translation.

2. *The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth*] R. V. **all the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord, the God of heaven, given me**. More correctly, (1) bringing out the emphasis implied by the position of the words in the original; (2) showing more accurately the usage of the Divine name.

The acknowledgment that all earthly sway is derived from Heavenly authority forms the basis of the decree. 'All the kingdoms of the

[1] The Jewish Commentators (e.g. Rashi) made the 70 years to terminate with the second year of Darius (521).

is there among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah, and

earth', the universality of the mission, with which Cyrus is divinely entrusted, justifies his action in dealing with the fortunes of a part.

The LORD God of heaven] literally 'Jahveh (i.e. Jehovah), the God of heaven'. This use of the sacred name of the God of the Jews in the decree of Cyrus gives occasion to the question, whether Cyrus knew, and, if he knew, believed in and worshipped the God of the Jews.

Commentators generally used to hold this view. This was not unnatural. For (1) they considered these verses to reproduce verbatim the decree of Cyrus: (2) they very generally supposed that Cyrus, being a Persian, was also a monotheist, who favoured the Jews on account of their monotheism, and saw in Jahveh a local representation of the One God that he adored: (3) they accepted and reproduced the statement of Josephus that Cyrus, having seen in Isaiah the Jewish prophecies relating to himself, recognised their fulfilment, and worshipped and believed in Jahveh: (4) they derived support for their view from analogous utterances of allegiance to the God of the Jews recorded of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius in Dan. iii. 28, 29, iv. 2—37, vi. 25—28.

But (1) it is evident that the edict in these verses is recorded in the words of the Hebrew translator and presented in its Jewish form. (2) Recent discoveries have shown that Cyrus was no monotheist. His own inscriptions testify to his having been a polytheist to the last. He acted as High Priest towards the great deities of Babylon. He constantly styles himself and his son Cambyses the worshippers of Nebo and Merodach. (3) The policy of the victorious monarch was to include among the lesser divinities of his Pantheon the gods of the subjugated countries, and to secure the favour of those who presided over different territories. The deities of whom he avowed himself the servant were (*a*) those of his own land, who had protected him in his career of victory, (*b*) those of the conquered kingdoms who had transferred to him their favour, and had thus permitted him to be victorious.

Whether Josephus' story that Cyrus had seen the prophecies of Isaiah is correct or not we cannot say. There is nothing in it intrinsically impossible. On the other hand, it was a very probable hypothesis to suggest itself to the mind of a Jew by which to account for Cyrus' benevolent action towards his race (see note on ver. 4).

When Cyrus here, in his edict, made use of a Divine name, he (*a*) either referred to one of the great gods whom he especially worshipped, e.g. Merodach, Nebo, Bel, for which the Hebrew version has reverently substituted the name of Jahveh: (*b*) or actually referred by name to Jahveh, as the god of the people, in whose favour the edict was promulgated.

The author of the book presupposes the acquaintance of heathen people with the popular use of the sacred Name which the Jew of later days was forbidden to pronounce.

build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he *is* the God,)
4 which *is* in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any

God of heaven] A title, found also in Darius' letter, chap. vi. 9, 10, and in Artaxerxes' letter, vii. 12, 21, 23. It is found in the Jewish reply reported in Tattenai's letter v. 12. In Nehemiah it occurs i. 4, 5, ii. 4, 20; cf. Ps. cxxxvi. 26; Dan. ii. 18, 19, 44. Like the similar phrase 'the God of heaven and earth' (v. 11) the title implies boundless sovereignty. For 'Heaven' combined the ideas of infinite space, cf. 1 Kings viii. 27; Jer. xxxi. 37, the forces of nature, cf. Ps. xix. 1, and the dwelling-place of Spiritual beings (cf. Is. lxvi. 1; 1 Kings viii. 30; Ps. ii. 4, cxv. 3.)

given me] An expression of pious humility on the part of Cyrus in acknowledgment of the fact that he had won by his sword, and not inherited, the kingdoms of his empire.

he] Very emphatic in the original (cf. LXX. αὐτὸς. Vulgate *ipse*).

hath charged me] The Divine mission which Cyrus probably unconsciously discharged is described in Isa. xliv. 24—28, xlv. 1—13. The view that he was shown these prophecies and was influenced by reading them has been already referred to. Some have also supposed that Cyrus was actuated by statements of Daniel as to his duty towards the chosen people. For neither view is there any historical evidence.

a house] i.e. a Temple.

at Jerusalem which is *in Judah*] with geographical detail, Judah being a small and obscure province, unknown probably in many quarters of the great Persian Empire.

3. *Who* is there *among you of all his people? his God*, &c.] R.V. **Whosoever there is among you of all his people, his God**, &c., rightly translating by the indefinite relative instead of by the interrogative pronoun.

among you] The decree is addressed to the inhabitants of the many kingdoms which the Persian Empire included.

of all his people] From the context, in which Judah and Jerusalem alone are mentioned, it is clear that the edict referred only to the Southern kingdom whose inhabitants had been 'deported' by Nebuchadnezzar. It is not likely that Cyrus would have been acquainted with the circumstances of the 'deportation' of the Northern kingdom by Sargon the Assyrian, so many years previously (721 B.C.), even if (which is most unlikely) the identity of the Ten Tribes had been preserved. At the same time there is good reason to suppose that some captives from the Northern tribes, who had preserved their lineage and their national religion, availed themselves of the opportunity which the decree of Cyrus offered them. See on ii. 2. Cf. 1 Chr. ix. 3.

his God be with him] The parallel passage in 2 Chron. xxxvi. 23 reads 'the LORD (Jahveh) his God *be* with him'. As it is more probable that the sacred Name should have been inserted than omitted by the Jewish copyists, the text as it stands in our verse is preferable; it is also supported by the LXX. and by 1 Esdras ii. 5. The word in the original for 'be' (y'hî), containing the first two consonants of 'Jahveh', may possibly have been mistaken for it and have given rise

place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with

to the variation. The words are a common form of blessing. Cf. English 'Good-bye' (God be with you). After the blessing comes the substance of the decree, (1) the Return, (2) the Building of the Temple.

and let him go up] Change of subject, "His God be with him and let such an one 'go up'". The journey to the land of Judah is treated as an ascent. Cf. "The Songs of Ascents", Pss. cxx.—cxxxiv.

and build] i.e. rebuild.

the LORD *God of Israel*] R.V. **the Lord, the God of Israel**, in the original 'Jahveh the God of Israel'; 'the God of Israel', the old national title used freely without room for misconception after the destruction of the Northern kingdom (cf. in Ezra iv. 1, 3, v. 1, vi. 14, 21, 22, vii. 6, 15, viii. 35, ix. 4, 15). The discipline of the Captivity had revived the conception of the true Israel (see Isai. xli. 17; Jer. xxx. 2; Ezek. viii. 4).

(*he* is *the God*,) *which* is *in Jerusalem*] So R.V. text, but R.V. margin '*he is the God which is in Jerusalem*', gives an alternative rendering.

(*a*) If the words 'he is the God' be taken parenthetically as in A.V. and R.V. text, then 'which is in Jerusalem' refers to 'the house of Jahveh'. It gives an additional piece of information necessary to those who did not associate the temples of gods with any one place. Temples of heathen gods, e.g. of Nebo, might be erected in any number of towns. Why not therefore of Jahveh? Cyrus' decree explicitly localizes the cult.

(*b*) Otherwise the words, 'which is in Jerusalem', are taken closely with 'He is the God', as in the margin of the R.V. This is the rendering of the LXX. (*αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς ὁ ἐν Ιερουσαλήμ*) and the Vulgate (*Ipse est Deus qui est in Ierusalem*). It is also supported by the Jewish tradition preserved by the Hebrew accents. Accepting this collocation of the words, the student must be careful to attach the proper emphasis to the words 'the God'. For the clause is not simply geographically explanatory of the foregoing words, 'the Lord the God of Israel', stating that 'he is the God who is in Jerusalem' in order to distinguish him from the gods of other localities. But the name, 'the GOD', is used emphatically (hâ-Elohim, not Elohim) and absolutely, as in verses 4 and 5. Compare 'The LORD He is *the* GOD' in 1 Kings xviii. 39. The sense then is 'He is The GOD, the Almighty, and He has made choice of Jerusalem as His dwelling-place'.

Reasons for preferring the former translation (i.e. that of the A.V. and R.V. Text) are the following

(1) The phrase 'which is in Jerusalem' is almost invariably in this book applied to the Temple or Temple service (cf. i. 4, 5, ii. 68, v. 2, 14, 15, 16, vi. 5, 12 (9, 18), vii. 15, 16, 17, 27). (2) It is not a natural phrase—whether part of the original edict or added by Jewish translator—by which to designate One who has already been termed 'the God of Israel'. (3) The objection to the separation (in the A.V. and R.V.) of the clause, "which is in J.", from the word to which it should be attached, has occasioned the rendering of the LXX., Vulg., and R.V. marg. (4) But a parenthetical 'He is the God' bears the impress of a

beasts, besides the freewill offering for the house of God that *is* in Jerusalem.

thoroughly Jewish insertion after the mention of the sacred Name. (5) The supposed significance of the alternative rendering disappears with the discovery that Cyrus was no monotheist. For Cyrus would not have said 'He is the (i.e. the true) God who is at Jerusalem'—while a post-captivity Jewish editor would not have introduced so unusual and restrictive a localization for his God.

We conclude therefore that the words 'He is the God' are a Jewish parenthesis inserted by the compiler reverently but awkwardly, in such a way as to break up the sentence 'the house of the Lord, the God of Israel—which is at Jerusalem'.

4. *And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth*] R.V. **And whosoever is left, in any place where he sojourneth.** The wording of this clause is a little ambiguous. The following paraphrase will give the meaning. 'In any place where survivors of the Jewish captivity are to be found sojourning, there let the natives of the place, the non-Israelite neighbours, render him all assistance.' That this is the right interpretation is shown by the passages Neh. i. 2, 'The Jews that had escaped, which *were left* of the captivity' and Hag. ii. 3, 'Who *is left* among you that saw this house in its former glory'. Cf. 2 Kings xxv. 22 and 'the residue' (R.V.) in Jer. viii. 3, xxiv. 8, xxxix. 9, &c.

The A.V. gives no intelligible sense. The R.V. (1) by altering 'remaineth' to 'is left' preserves the application of the word in the original to the survivors of the Captivity, (2) by punctuation indicates the construction of the verse, in which 'whosoever is left' is placed independently as a heading to the whole sentence; while the words 'in any place where he sojourneth' do not belong to 'whosoever is left' but introduce the succeeding clause 'let the men &c.'

The passage is somewhat awkwardly worded, but with the above explanation is rendered quite clear in meaning. The decree made no universal requisition for aid to the Jews. It only enjoined that local assistance should be given by neighbours, wherever any resident Jew availed himself of the king's edict for the Return.

sojourneth] The word in the original regularly used in the sense of 'to dwell as a stranger'. Cf. Lev. xix. 34.

help] The A.V. margin has 'Heb. lift him up'. The word in the original is the intensive Mood of the verb 'to lift or carry', and occurs in 1 Kings ix. 11 = 'furnished'. The LXX. (ἀντιλαμβανέσθωσαν αὐτοῦ) renders the sense well by the Greek word so familiar to English readers in the words 'He hath holpen Israel his servant' (Luke i. 54).

with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts] The assistance should be given in money for the journey, in necessaries for the new homes, and in means of transport.—"Goods" a vague word, reproducing the indefiniteness of the original. It occurs again viii. 21, x. 8, = 'substance' in A.V. and R.V. (LXX. κτῆσις and ὕπαρξις, Vulgate 'substantia'). Here the LXX. has ἀποσκευή and the Vulgate 'substantia'. From its use in these passages and in Genesis xii. 5, xiii. 6, we gather

Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and 5
Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all *them*
whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of

that the word means the moveables of a household. 'Beasts' i.e. beasts of burden—horses, camels and asses. Cf. ii. 66, 67.

besides the freewill offering] 'beside', i.e. along with (Vulg. wrongly 'excepto quod') certain voluntary gifts of a more private nature especially intended for the Temple, as in chap. viii. 25. Compare the freewill-offerings mentioned in Ex. xxxv. 29; Lev. xxii. 23. This free-will offering is not to be restricted, as by some commentators, to the gifts either of Cyrus or of the Jews who remained behind. Any one, Jew or Gentile, could make such offerings, iii. 5.

for the house of God] These words denote the object of the free-will offering: and are not, as the Hebrew accents interpret, to be taken as following after 'help him', the intervening words being taken parenthetically.

that is *in Jerusalem*] R.V. **which is**, consistently with verses 2 and 3. The clause refers to 'the house'. Some understand 'God' as the antecedent to 'which'; but see note on a similar interpretation in ver. 3. The expression is in its explicitness similar to 'Jerusalem which is in Judah' (ver. 2).

5—11. The Return of the Jews under Sheshbazzar: a brief summary of events.

5. *the chief of the fathers*] R.V. **the heads of fathers' houses.** Literally rendered, the term would be 'the heads of the fathers'. Cf. the Latin 'principes patrum'. See Ex. vi. 14. For the subdivision into (1) tribe, (2) family, (3) household, compare especially Josh. vii. 16—18.

with all them] R.V. **even all.** The construction in the original is peculiar. The preposition 'to' or 'for' stands before 'all', and the relative is omitted. The A.V. takes the clause to briefly summarize 'the rest' (i.e. the supplementary list of them) who, not being classed under (*a*) the heads of fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, (*b*) priests, (*c*) Levites, formed a fourth division of the people. By comparison with other passages such as 1 Chr. xiii. 1, 2, 2 Chr. v. 12, where the same or a similar construction in the original is found, we see that the R.V. is correct. The preposition does not supplement, it defines. All included under the *three* groups mentioned in the verse, 'rose up'. The whole community is summed up under these three heads, cf. vi. 16, 20.

whose spirit God had raised] R.V. **had stirred up.** The same phrase as in verse 1. Verse 5 follows as the direct result of verse 1. It is important therefore that the same words should be used to translate the same phrase.

'God' here is 'ha-Elohim', *the* GOD=Jahveh of verse 1 who also stirred up the spirit of Cyrus. The wonder of the Return is shown to be wholly due to Divine overruling. The will of the sovereign to

6 the LORD which *is* in Jerusalem. And all *they that were* about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious
7 things, beside all *that* was willingly offered. Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD,

proclaim the decree and the will of the subject to avail himself of it are alike controlled by Him.

to go up to build] Observe the punctuation. In the A.V. these words are by the punctuation connected with the main verb 'rose up'. The R.V. connects the words with the last clause alone, and thus (*a*) avoids collocation of 'rose up' with to 'go up'; (*b*) divides the verse into two balanced sentences, the general statement and its closer definition.

6. *And all* they that were *about them*] R.V. **round about them.** A general expression which would include both the heathen neighbours, alluded to (in ver. 3) by the edict, and the Jewish neighbours, not contemplated in the edict, who preferred to remain in the land of the Captivity.

strengthened their hands] The use of this expression differs slightly in the grammar of the original from such passages as Neh. ii. 18, 'So they strengthened their hands for the good work'; Jer. xxiii. 14, 'they strengthen the hands of evil doers'. In those passages the idea is simply that of 'invigorating' and 'adding strength'. Here the employment of a preposition introduces a shade of variety into the metaphor. The idea is that of 'grasping', 'laying firm hold on the hand with the view of strengthening or supporting'. The Jews who sought to return were like a convalescent essaying to walk and needing assistance. Cf. Is. li. 18, 'There is none that taketh her by the hand of all the sons that she hath brought up'.

vessels of silver, with gold] we should expect 'with vessels of gold', cf. ver. 9.

with goods] see ver. 4.

and with precious things] A rare word in the original, 'migdânoth'. It occurs in 2 Chron. xxi. 3 = A.V. and R.V. *precious things*, xxxii. 23 = A.V. *presents*, R.V. *precious things*. And in a well-known passage, Gen. xxiv. 53 = A.V. and R.V. *precious things*. The Latin here 'in supellectili' is a mere guess. The LXX. rendering 'ἐν ξενίοις' = with gifts agrees with their rendering δῶρα in Gen., and δόματα in 2 Chr. xxxii. In 2 Chr. xxi. 3 they render by ὅπλα.

beside all that *was willingly offered*] i.e. these gifts were over and above the free-will offerings. The clause in the original is peculiar, 'beside over and above all *one* willingly offered'. The relative is omitted as in ver. 4, but is implied in 'all'. The verb is active in meaning (cf. ii. 68, iii. 5) and is here used impersonally.

7. *Also Cyrus the king*] i.e. the Jews were assisted not only by private individuals their neighbours, but by the example of the king himself.

which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods; even those did 8

the vessels of the house of the LORD, *which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth* &c.] This refers especially to the capture of Jerusalem in 598, when Jehoiachin, his household and 10,000 of the better classes were carried off to Babylon. 2 Kings xxiv. 13 'And he (i.e. Nebuchadnezzar) carried out thence (i.e. from Jerusalem) all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD'. It may be noticed that in the original the expression 'carried out' in the passage just cited and so translated in A.V. and R.V. is identical with the 'brought forth' in this verse.

At the final destruction of Jerusalem (586) eleven or twelve years later, by Nebuzaradan, Nebuchadnezzar's general, the remainder of the valuables contained in the house of the Lord were 'taken away' to Babylon, 2 Kings xxv. 14, 15.

The passage in Dan. i. 1, 2, which attributes to the third year (606) of Jehoiakim's reign a siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, the capture of Jehoiakim, and the removal to Babylon of some of the sacred vessels, is chronologically incorrect. (1) The victory of Carchemish on the Euphrates was not won by Nebuchadnezzar till the fourth year of Jehoiakim (605). (2) According to 2 Kings xxiv. 1 Jehoiakim, who had been tributary to the king of Egypt, did not become tributary to Nebuchadnezzar until after that battle, and, having remained so for three years only, then rebelled. This rebellion led to Nebuchadnezzar's siege and capture of Jerusalem in Jehoiachin's brief reign of three months. All that can be said is that we have in Dan. i. 1, 2, a certain chronological error, but that it is conceivable that when Nebuchadnezzar 'came up' (2 Kings xxiv. 1) and Jehoiakim submitted, a siege may have preceded capitulation, and a carrying off to Babylon both of prisoners and of some vessels of the Lord may have taken place in 602 or 601. Of this we have no certain confirmation, and it is more probable that the passage in Daniel i. 1 may be a heading containing inaccurate historical statements or late tradition prefixed by a scribe to the narrative of Daniel.

in the house of his gods] So A.V. and R.V. The original is 'in the house of his Elohim'. 'Elohim' may be rendered either as 'God' or 'gods' according as the context requires. The student will observe that in Daniel i. 2 the same phrase 'the house of his Elohim' is rendered both by A.V. and R.V. 'the house of his god'. Nebuchadnezzar was a polytheist. But had the stress here rested upon the plurality of his gods, we should have expected 'in the houses of his gods'. The rendering 'in the house of his god' appears preferable, both on account of the singular 'house' and, especially, on account of Nebuchadnezzar's devotion to one god, Merodach, to whom he paid greater honour than to any of the other deities of the Babylonian pantheon. The Temple of E-sagila in honour of Merodach was restored by Nebuchadnezzar with unrivalled splendour. The passage in

Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the

2 Chron. xxxvi. 7 'Nebuchadnezzar also carried of the vessels of the house of the Lord to Babylon and put them in his temple at Babylon', helps to confirm the rendering 'in the house of his god'. The other passages relating to the sacred vessels are Jer. xxvii. 16, xxviii. 6, lii. 18; Dan. v. 23; Baruch i. 8.

8. *by the hand of*] So A. V. and R. V. This phrase in the original is a little difficult. It occurs Ezr. viii. 26, 'I even weighed *into their hand* &c.', 33, 'was the silver and the gold and the vessels weighed *into the hand* of', &c. (marg. 'by'), Esth. vi. 9, 'let the apparel and the horse be delivered *to the hand* of one of the king's most noble princes'. It seems better here to render '*into* the hand of'. The vessels were brought out and given into the charge of Mithredath, who was to superintend their numbering.

Mithredath the treasurer] This is the Hebrew form of the old Persian name 'Mithradata', familiar to us as Mithridates. On coins we find the more correct transliteration 'Mithradates'. It was a very common name among the Medo-Persians, cf. iv. 7. It is derived from 'Mithras', the name of the Persian sun-god, and the root 'da'=to give, and has been differently understood to mean either 'given *by* Mithras', or 'given, i.e. dedicated, *to* Mithras'. Of these the former is the preferable Cf. Hormisdas='given by Ormuzd', Theodotus='given by God'.

the treasurer] The word in the original is a Persian, not a Hebrew word, and occurs again vii. 21; Dan. iii. 2, 3. The 'gizbar', Old Persian 'gazabara', mentioned here seems to have been the king's Privy Purse, the bearer or dispenser of the royal treasure. The Persian word will remind the student of the Hellenistic 'gaza' (γάζα)='treasure' adopted from the Persian. The Ethiopian Eunuch, chamberlain to queen Candace, was 'over all her treasure', ἐπὶ πάσης τῆς γάζης αὐτῆς (Acts viii. 27). The word for 'the treasury', used in the gospels, means "the place for keeping the 'gaza'," γαζοφυλάκιον (cf. Mark xii. 41; Luke xxi. 1; John viii. 20).

and numbered them] so A. V. R.V. Better, **and he numbered them.** The king made the gift; his officer had the charge of its disposition and valuation.

unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah] There seems to be no good reason to doubt that the Sheshbazzar mentioned here and in v. 14, 16 is the same as Zerubbabel. For although Zerubbabel (iii. 2, 8, iv. 3, v. 2) is not designated by any official title in our book, still (1) the manner in which he is regarded as the representative of the Jewish returned exiles in iv. 2, (2) the fact that his name, as that of the chief layman and of the head of the Davidic line, is associated with that of the High-priest Jeshua in the general administration, iii. 2, 8, iv. 3, v. 2; Hag. i. 1; Zech. iii. iv, (3) the title of 'governor (pekhah) of Judah' given him by the prophet Haggai (i. 1, ii. 2, 21), and given also to Sheshbazzar (Ezra v. 14) make it reasonable to suppose that Sheshbazzar was another name of Zerubbabel, just as Belteshazzar,

prince of Judah. And this *is* the number of them: thirty 9
chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine and
twenty knives, thirty basons of gold, silver basons of a 10
second sort four hundred and ten, *and* other vessels a

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were the names given in the Captivity to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (Dan. i. 6, 7). To this view the objection has fairly been raised that in Daniel we find a Babylonish by the side of a Hebrew name, but that in this case both Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel are considered to be Babylonish names, and that it is very strange to find the same man called in a Jewish book by two foreign names. This objection may possibly be met by regarding Zerubbabel as the name, though of foreign origin, which he took as prince among his own people, Sheshbazzar as the name by which he was known at the court of the Persian king. At any rate Sheshbazzar is here called 'the prince of Judah' and in v. 14 he is mentioned as conveying the sacred vessels and laying the foundation of the Temple. See also the Introduction, § 6.

the prince of Judah] The 'nasi' of Judah. In two passages he is given the title of 'Tirshatha', the Persian equivalent of the Assyrian 'pekhah' (Ezr. ii. 63, Neh. vii. 65, 70). He is called 'pekhah' or 'Tirshatha'' in relation to the Persian government. In relation to his own people, he is called 'nasi' or prince either as head of the great tribe of Judah (cf. the title 'nasi' of the 'princes' of the tribes in Num. vii., xxxiv. 22—28), or as the representative of the royal house of David (cf. especially the frequent use of this term in Ezekiel, chaps. xlv. xlvi. xlviii.). In later days this title was taken by Simon, the brother of Judas the Maccabee, whose coins contain the legend 'Simon the prince (nasi) of Israel'. Sheshbazzar is mentioned here alone. The prominence of the High-priest seems to date from the arrival at Jerusalem.

9. *chargers*] The word in the original does not occur elsewhere in the Bible. Its meaning is very uncertain: (1) the old Jewish interpretation quoted by Aben Ezra derived it from two words meaning 'to collect' and 'a lamb', and understood it to be applied to 'vessels intended to receive the blood of victims'; (2) the LXX. translates by 'wine-coolers' (ψυκτῆρες); (3) Esdras by 'libation-vessels' (σπονδεῖα); (4) another rendering, based upon a similar root in Arabic, Syriac and Ethiopic, is 'baskets'.

knives] The word in the original occurs here only in the Bible. Vulg. 'cultri'. This rendering is very uncertain. Other interpretations are (1) 'censers', (θυΐσκαι) in 1 Esdras. (2) (?) 'changes of raiment'—so apparently the LXX. παρηλλαγμένα—possibly cf. Judg. xiv. 19. (3) 'vessels adorned with network'—so Ewald comparing a similar word in Judg. xvi. 13, 19.

10. *basons*] R.V. **bowls**—i.e. vessels provided with covers or lids, almost our 'tankards'. Lat. 'scyphi'. The word occurs in 1 Chr. xxviii. 17 and Ezr. viii. 27.

of a second sort] The fact that they were silver distinguishes them

11 thousand. All the vessels of gold and of silver *were* five thousand and four hundred. All *these* did Sheshbazzar

from the golden bowls just mentioned and makes this expression seem superfluous. The versions were puzzled by it: LXX. renders 'double' διπλοῦ: Vulg. 'second' ('secundi'). The words, as they stand, imply, that the silver bowls were secondary in quality or intended for inferior purposes. In all probability we have here some corruption in the text: see note on ver. 11.

11. *All the vessels*, &c., *five thousand and four hundred*] It is natural to expect that the words 'all the vessels' would give us the sum total of the different figures mentioned in vv. 9 and 10. The sum total however mentioned here is 5400. The vessels enumerated under the six classes (in vv. 9, 10), when added together, make only 2499. Unless we concede that the text is incorrect, the only solution of the variation is to suppose that verses 9 and 10 omit a large number of less important vessels. This is unsatisfactory, since the words 'and other vessels a thousand' are obviously intended to cover the remainder.

It is probable therefore that the discrepancy arises from some ancient corruption in the text, which has been caused by copyists' errors in transcribing numbers. This is a frequent source of mistake.

The LXX. has the same text as the Hebrew, so that the error is of very ancient origin. The 1st Book of Esdras has two variations in the list of items, reading (1) '1000' for '30' 'chargers of gold', (2) '2410' for '410' 'silver bowls' (reading '2000' instead of 'a second sort'), and gives a total corresponding to its figures, i.e. 5469.

Some scholars, seeing in the variations of 1 Esdras a clue to the true solution, maintain that the corruption of the text is to be found in the figures both of the items and of the total. (*a*) They reject the variation of '1000' for '30' chargers as a round number inserted by 1 Esdras; (*b*) they read '1000' for '30' 'bowls of gold', on the ground that 30 is too small a figure, since Ezra himself brought 20 of this description (Ezr. viii. 28); (*c*) they read '2410' for '410 of a second sort,' on the authority of 1 Esdras. These alterations bring the total to 5469, agreeing with 1 Esdras.

Ewald (*a*) combining the reading of Ezra and 1 Esdras reads '1030' for '30' 'chargers', (*b*) keeping the '30' 'bowls of gold', accepts the 1 Esdras reading of 2410, and thus obtains the total of 5499.

Keil suspecting that the corruption is to be found in the sum total rather than in the items, suggests that by an accidental transposition of figures the true number of 2500 has become altered to 5400.

In favour of this view, it must be admitted that (1) the figure of 5400 is surprisingly large, (2) copyists had a greater tendency to increase than to reduce numbers. But as the items are given in detail, so we should expect the sum total to be given exactly and not merely in a round number. As we have the two best texts agreeing in this total figure 5400, it is better to look for the error among the items. The reading of 1 Esdras '2410' may possibly be correct.

But in the absence of further evidence we are left to conjecture either

bring up with *them of* the captivity that were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem.

that some items have accidentally fallen out or that some of the present figures have been wrongly transcribed.

with them of *the captivity that were brought up*] R.V. **when they of the captivity were brought up.** The original here is rather condensed. The versions failed to translate the passage. LXX. τὰ πάντα τὰ ἀναβαίνοντα [μετὰ Σασαβασσὰρ] ἀπὸ τῆς ἀποικίας ἐκ Βαβυλῶνος. Vulg. '*universa tulit Sassabasar cum his, qui ascendebant de transmigratione Babylonis*'.

The meaning of the clause is practically the same. But the more precise sense conveyed by the R.V. is the only right translation, i.e. that Sheshbazzar brought up the vessels *at the time* when 'the captivity' was brought up. The emphasis is on the *time* of the removal—not on the *caravan* which accompanied it.

were brought up] the same word used of the 'breaking up' of a camp in Jer. xxxvii. 11.

the captivity] the reader will notice that the journey of Sheshbazzar and his companions from Babylon to Jerusalem is disposed of in a single verse. We hear nothing of the details or of the difficulties of the journey, which must have lasted three or four months, cf. vii. 8, 9.

It has been suggested that here should be introduced the passage 1 Esdr. v. 1—6 'After this were the principal men of the families chosen according to their tribes, to go up with their wives and sons and daughters, with their menservants and maidservants and cattle. (2) And Darius sent with them a thousand horsemen, till they had brought them back to Jerusalem safely, and with musical [instruments] tabrets and flutes. (3) And all their brethren played, and he made them go up together with them. (4) And these are the names of the men which went up, according to their families among their tribes, after their several heads. (5) The priests, the sons of Phinees, the son of Aaron: Jesus, the son of Josedec, the son of Saraias, and Joacim, the son of Zerobabel, the son of Salathiel, of the house of David, out of the kindred of Phares, of the tribe of Judah; (6) who spake wise sentences before Darius the king of Persia in the second year of his reign in the month Nisan which is the first month.' The name Darius being taken as an error for Cyrus, and verses 5 and 6 being considered to be an interpolation, the passage would give us information as to (*a*) the orderly preparations, (*b*) the armed escort, for the expedition, (*c*) the festal character of the start, (*d*) the date of the departure, and would throw light upon 'the seventh month' mentioned in iii. 1, and 'the second year' mentioned in iii. 8.

The general style fairly corresponds with that of the books Ezra and Chronicles. But (*a*) it cannot be conceded that these verses join naturally on to chap. ii. 1. (*b*) In the original context (1 Esd. v.) they have all the appearance of a gloss inserted to connect the legend of Darius and the Three young men (iii., iv.) with the resumption of the narrative (v. 7). (*c*) There is nothing impossible, supposing the passage to be a genuine extract from existing records, in such an expedition having

2 Now these *are* the children of the province that went up out of the captivity, *of* those which had been carried away,

been made in the second year of king Darius, and in supposing that the arrival of this priestly contingent would have encouraged the prophets Haggai and Zechariah in their task of arousing the people to complete the Temple (cf. the second year of Darius Hag. i. 1; Zech. i. 1).

The journey, which would have probably been N. and N.W. along the Euphrates by Haran as far as the fords of Carchemish, and then S.W. and S. through the territory of the old kingdoms of Hamath, Syria and Samaria, must have occupied a considerable interval of time. Ezra and his band took four months (ch. vii. 8, 9) in accomplishing the same distance. Perhaps no record was preserved of the incidents of the journey, and the compiler passes on to subjects for which he had written materials to draw from.

Chap. II. The Register of the Return.

Chap. ii. contains the register or list of those who returned to Jerusalem, with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and their companions. The register gives the names in the following order, (1) 'the men of the people of Israel' (3—35), (2) the Priests (36—39), (3) the Levites, Singers, Porters, Nethinim, 'children of the servants of Solomon' (40—58), (4) miscellaneous (59— 63), (5) the sum total, &c. (64—67).

The same list is to be found in Neh. vii. 6—73, and 1 Esdras v. 7—45. Certain variations occur both in the names and in the figures, the most important of which will come under notice in the following notes.

1. *Now these* are *the children of the province*] 'Now', as in chap. i. 1: the beginning of a new document. 'The province' here and in Neh. i. 3, xi. 3, is the same as 'the province of Judah' (Ezr. v. 8), i.e. the particular district of which Jerusalem was the centre and of which Zerubbabel was governor or 'pekhah'. 'The children of the province' are the Jews inhabiting Jerusalem and its vicinity as distinct from the Jews that were left in Babylon. The phrase is perhaps an indication of the register having been transcribed at Babylon.

out of the captivity, of *those which had been carried away*] The comma in the A.V. tends to confuse the meaning. The R.V. better, **out of the captivity of those which had been carried away.** The English fails to give the sense of the passage. The words 'those which had been carried away' translate the one Hebrew word rendered in chap. i. 11 and elsewhere 'the captivity' (hag-gôlah). This was the technical abstract noun used to designate the Jews that had been carried away into foreign lands. The words here used are more nearly reproduced in the Greek version ἀπὸ τῆς αἰχμαλωσίας τῆς ἀποικίας. 'From the captivity of the Gôlah' means therefore 'out of the condition and scene of captivity which was the lot of 'the deportation', i.e. of those who had been forcibly removed from their homes'. Cf. i. 11, vi. 20.

whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city; which came with Zerub- 2
babel: Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mizpar, Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah.

Nebuchadnezzar] R.V. margin, 'Heb. *Nebuchadnezzor*'. This spelling represents the preferable reading of the original in this verse. It again indicates the different origin of this section from chap. i. 7, where the Hebrew has 'Nebuchadnezzar' without any variant spelling. 'Nebuchadnezzor' attempts more nearly to reproduce the final syllable of the Assyrian 'Nabû-kudur-uṣur' i.e. 'Nebo, defend the crown'. He is called 'Nebuchadrezzar' in several places. Once in Jer. xlix. 28 (C'thib) 'Nebuchadrezzor'.

The great king of Babylon reigned 43 years (605—562). The two chief 'deportations' took place (1) in 598, when Nebuchadnezzar carried away king Jehoiachin and all the principal inhabitants of Jerusalem; (2) in 587—6, when the city was destroyed.

every one unto his city] It is impossible to take these words as literally applicable to the year of the Return. The Jews on their return to their own land at first only occupied Jerusalem and the country immediately adjacent. The work of settling into their own cities was the work of years. But the process was complete at the time when this heading was attached to the register of names. The writer summarizes the movement, which in his own time was long past, cf. ver. 70, iii. 1.

2. *which came with Zerubbabel:*] Better punctuate as R.V. '*with Zerubbabel,*'. Those referred to are the main subject of ver. 1, 'the children of the province, &c.', and are here described as coming with Zerubbabel and his companions.

Zerubbabel] (i.e. 'begotten in Babylon', or 'the seed of Babylon') is said to be an Assyrian name. The grandson of Jehoiachin, Zerubbabel was the representative of David's dynasty (see 1 Chron. iii. 16 &c.). He is generally called 'the son of Shealtiel' (see note on iii. 2), but the genealogy in 1 Chron. (iii. 19) represents him as the son of Pedaiah. He is called 'the son of Shealtiel' either as Shealtiel's nephew and heir, or as Shealtiel's legal son, Pedaiah having contracted a Levirate marriage with Shealtiel's widow.

On the identity of Zerubbabel and Sheshbazzar see note on i. 8.

Jeshua] is a shortened form of Jehoshua or Joshua, used in Neh. viii. 17 for the name of 'the son of Nun'. The Jeshua here spoken of (and Ezra iii. 2, 8, iv. 3) is the Joshua mentioned in Hag. i. 1, 12, 14, ii. 2, 4; Zech. iii. 1, 3, 6, vi. 11. He is the High-priest of the Return from the Captivity, being the son of Jehozadak, and grandson of the Seraiah whom Nebuchadnezzar put to death at Riblah after the destruction of Jerusalem, cf. 2 Kings xxv. 18—21; Jer. lii. 24—27 (B.C. 586). See the genealogy of 'the sons of Levi' in 1 Chron. vi. 1—15.

Nehemiah] not to be confounded with the better known Nehemiah, who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem 90 years later, 445 B.C.

3 The number of the men of the people of Israel: the children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy and

Seraiah]=Azariah, Neh. vii. 7.
Reelaiah]=Raamiah, Neh. vii. 7.
Mordecai] not to be identified with the Mordecai of the book Esther.
Mizpah] A. V. transliterates incorrectly, making the form of the word to resemble the common Hebrew name of a place. R. V. **Mispar** correctly; for which compare 'Mispereth', Neh. vii. 7.
Rehum]=Nehum, Neh. vii. 7.
The names (including Zerubbabel) here recorded are 11 in number. The parallel passage in Nehemiah gives 12 names, that of Nahamani occurring between Reelaiah and Mordecai, and this is supported by the mention of 12 names in 1 Esdras v. 8, where Euenius corresponds to Nahamani.

Ezra (A.V.)	Nehemiah vii. 7 (A.V.)	1 Esdr. v. 8 (A.V.)
Zerubbabel	Zerubbabel	Zorobabel
Jeshua	Jeshua	Jesus
Nehemiah	Nehemiah	Nehemias
Seraiah	Azariah	Zacharias
Reelaiah	Raamiah	Reesaias
	Nahamani	Euenius
Mordecai	Mordecai	Mardochæus
Bilshan	Bilshan	Beelsarus
Mizpah (Mispar, R.V.)	Mispereth	Aspharasus
Bigvai	Bigvai	Reelius
Rehum	Nehum	Roimus
Baanah	Baanah	Baana

It is most probable that the name of Nahamani has dropped out of our text by an early error of transcription. The mention then of 11 names along with that of Zerubbabel suggests the idea that the attempt was made to revive the old subdivision of the people and to group the members of two tribes under twelve representative princes in the same way as four classes of priests were afterwards re-divided into twenty-four. The idea of the twelve tribes conveyed the thought of Israel's totality and unity (*a*) in the days of the divided monarchy, cf. Elijah, 1 Kings xviii. 31; (*b*) at the dedication of the second Temple, Ezr. vi. 17; (*c*) at the return of Ezra and his company, cf. Ezr. viii. 35; (*d*) in the later days of Judaism, e.g. Acts xxvi. 7; Jas. i. 1; Rev. vii. 4—8.
The number of the men of the people of Israel] These words form a heading for the register of names to the close of ver. 35. They point forward and not back. It was an awkward mistake of arrangement to include the sentence in verse 2. It should commence verse 3; compare the headings in vv. 36, 40, 41, 42, 43, 55. Observe the name 'the people of Israel' applied here to the laity as a class distinct from 'priests' and 'Levites', cf. vi. 16.

two. The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy 4
and two. The children of Arah, seven hundred seventy 5

3. Comparing this list with the lists in Neh. vii. and 1 Esdr. v. we obtain the following results, in which, *where any variation occurs*, 'Esd.' marks the agreement of 1 Esdras with either Ezra or Nehemiah, where their lists differ.

	Ezra		Nehem.
The children of Parosh	2172		2172
,, ,, Shephatiah	372		372
,, ,, Arah	775	(Esd. 756)	652
,, ,, Pahath-moab, of the children of Jeshua and Joab	2812	(Esd.)	2818
,, ,, Elam	1254		1254
,, ,, Zattu	945	(Esd.)	845
,, ,, Zaccai	760		760
,, ,, Bani	642		648 (Esd.)
,, ,, Bebai	623	(Esd.)	628
,, ,, Azgad	1222	(Esd. 3222)	2322
,, ,, Adonikam	666		667 (Esd.)
,, ,, Bigvai	2056	(Esd. 2066)	2067
,, ,, Adin	454	(Esd.)	655
,, ,, Ater, of Hezekiah	98		98
,, ,, Bezai	323	(Esd.)	324
,, ,, Jora	112	= Harif	112 (vii. 24)
,, ,, Hashum	223		328
,, ,, Gibbar	95	= Gibeon	95
,, ,, Bethlehem	123	(Esd.)	188
The men of Netophah	56	(Esd. 55)	
,, ,, Anathoth	128		
The children of Azmaveth	42	= the men of Beth-azmaveth	42
,, ,, Kirjath-arim, Chephirah, and Beeroth	743		743
,, ,, Rama and Geba	621		621
The men of Michmas	122		122
,, ,, Bethel and Ai	223		123
The children of Nebo	52		52
,, ,, Magbish	156	(Esd.).	wanting
,, ,, 'the other Elam'	1254		1254
,, ,, Harim	320		320
,, ,, Lod, Hadid and Ono	725	(Esd.)	721
,, ,, Jericho	345		345
,, ,, Senaah	3630	(Esd. 3330)	3930

6 and five. The children of Pahath-moab, of the children of Jeshua *and* Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve.

Priests.		
The children of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua	973	973
,, ,, Immer	1052	1052
,, ,, Pashur	1247	1247
,, ,, Harim	1017	1017
Levites.		
The children of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the children of Hodaviah	74	74
,, ,, Asaph	128 (Esd.)	148
,, ,, Shallum, Ater, Talmon, Akkub, Hatita, Shobai	139 (Esd.)	138
The Nethinim and the children of Solomon's servants	392	392
The children of Delaiah, &c.	652	642
The children of the priests	(number not given).	

(*a*) It will be seen that the most important variations in the figures occur with the children of Arah (ver. 5), Zattu (ver. 8), Azgad (ver. 12), Adin (ver. 15), Hashum (ver. 19), Bethel and Ai (ver. 28), Senaah (ver. 35); while 'the children of Magbish' (ver. 30) are not mentioned in Nehemiah. The variations in the figures are probably due to errors of transcription from the original copy of the register.

(*b*) The text of Ezra seems to be purer than that of Nehemiah, while that of Esdras is inferior to both.

Upon the text of vv. 31 and 32 see below.

3—19. Names of households or families. Many of these names occur again in other lists, e.g. Ezr. viii. 1—14, x. 18—44; Neh. x. 1—27, and in connexion with much later events in the lifetime of Ezra and Nehemiah. These names therefore are not to be regarded as the names of the leading men of the various families who accompanied Zerubbabel, but as the *titles* of the families or clans into which the people were divided. These titles were probably taken from the founders of the families and were many of them of great antiquity. The mention of the same names of the 'families' at the return of Ezra (viii. 1—14) merely shows that, though a certain number of a household had accompanied Zerubbabel, many members of it remained in Babylon, of whom some returned with Ezra, e.g. Parosh, Pahath-moab, Adin, Shephatiah, Elam, Bebai, Azgad, Adonikam, Bigvai, &c., cf. Neh. x. 14 ff.

3. *The children of Parosh*] A strange proper name, meaning a 'flea'. A special branch of this family, called after Shechaniah, returned with Ezra (viii. 3). Members of the family are mentioned as having married 'strange wives' (x. 25) and as assisting in the rebuilding of the walls (Neh. iii. 25).

6. *The children of Pahath-moab, of the children of Jeshua* and

The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and 7
four. The children of Zattu, nine hundred forty and five. 8
The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore. The 9, 10
children of Bani, six hundred forty and two. The children 11
of Bebai, six hundred twenty and three. The children of 12
Azgad, a thousand two hundred twenty and two. The 13
children of Adonikam, six hundred sixty and six. The 14
children of Bigvai, two thousand fifty and six. The children 15
of Adin, four hundred fifty and four. The children of Ater 16
of Hezekiah, ninety and eight. The children of Bezai, 17
three hundred twenty and three. The children of Jorah, an 18
hundred and twelve. The children of Hashum, two 19
hundred twenty and three. The children of Gibbar, ninety 20

Joab] Pahath = ruler of. We must suppose that the founder of this family had exercised rule over some portion of the Moabite territory. We learn from 1 Chron. iv. 22 that certain members of the tribe of Judah 'had the dominion in Moab'. Probably this family belonged to the tribe of Judah. The word Pahath was commonly in use in Assyria, and is similar to the term for 'governor'. Part of this family returned with Ezra (viii. 4): certain members of it are mentioned in x. 30; Neh. iii. 11.

Jeshua and *Joab*] In the original 'Jeshua Joab'. These were special branches of the main family.

7. *Elam*] Some would identify with the Elam mentioned 1 Chr. viii. 24—a Benjamite.

12. *The children of Azgad, a thousand two hundred twenty and two*] The most serious discrepancy in the list (Neh. gives 2322, Esdras 3222), arising from error in the transcription of numbers. The smallest figure is intrinsically the most probable. The highest figure, given in 1 Esdr., attempts to combine the two other readings.

13. *Adonikam*] This name appears in Neh. x. 16 as Adonijah.

16. *The children of Ater of Hezekiah*] i.e., the family of Ater was represented by one branch called by the name of Hezekiah, cf. ver. 6.

18. *Jorah*] called in Nehemiah (vii. 24, x. 19) Hariph, with which may be compared Hareph (1 Chr. ii. 51) of the sons of Caleb. The interchange of names is the more strange when we remember that the Hebrew word 'Joreh' means 'autumn-rain' while the Hebrew 'Horeph' means 'the autumn-season'.

20—35. Names of towns and places. It is possible that the register dealt first with the dwellers in Jerusalem. The inhabitants of the towns and places nearest to Jerusalem and best known are mentioned next: last of all, the inhabitants of the less known or more remote places. The numbers are much smaller than those of the households (3—19).

20. *Gibbar*] Neh. vii. 25 'Gibeon' (for which our text is probably an early error), the famous scene of Joshua's victory (Josh. x.), of the

21 and five. The children of Beth-lehem, an hundred twenty
22, 23 and three. The men of Netophah, fifty and six. The men
24 of Anathoth, an hundred twenty and eight. The children
25 of Azmaveth, forty and two. The children of Kirjath-arim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty and

battle between David's and Ishbosheth's men (2 Sam. ii.), of Joab's murder of Amasa (2 Sam. xx. 8), the abode of the tabernacle (1 Kings iii. 4; 1 Chron. xvi. 39, xxi. 29; 2 Chron. i. 3), the high-place at which the Lord appeared unto Solomon in a dream (1 Kings iii. 4).

The false prophet Hananiah (Jer. xxviii. 1) came from Gibeon. The modern 'El-Jib,' distant about 5 miles N.W. from Jerusalem, in the territory of Benjamin.

21. *Beth-lehem*] or 'the house of bread': sometimes called Bethlehem of Judah to distinguish it from the Bethlehem in Zebulon (Jos. xix. 15). Its name implies the fruitfulness of the soil. The name of Ephrath or Ephratah by which it was known in earlier times has also the meaning of plenty (cf. Gen. xxxv. 19; Mic. v. 1; Ruth i. 2). The story of Ruth lies in Bethlehem. Ibzan the Judge was a native of Bethlehem (Judg. xii. 8). Its greatest fame in the O. T. is derived from its having been the birthplace of David (1 Sam. xvii. 12) and of the sons of Zeruiah (2 Sam. ii. 32). It was only a village, but the prophet predicted its glory in the Messianic future (Micah v. 1), in words, of which the literal fulfilment is recorded in Matt. ii. 1 &c.; Luke ii. 1 &c.; cf. Joh. vii. 42.

It is situated about 5 miles S. of Jerusalem on high ground, some 2500 ft. above the level of the sea.

22. *Netophah*] According to 1 Chron. ix. 16 a town inhabited by priests, the birthplace of two of David's heroes, Mahari and Haled, 2 Sam. xxiii. 28, 29, and of Seraiah, one of Gedaliah's supporters, 2 Kings xxv. 23; Jer. xl. 8 (Ephai). It has been identified by some with Beit Nettîf, 20 miles W. of Bethlehem. But its place in the list between Bethlehem and Anathoth does not favour this theory. In the map of Palestine issued by the Pal. Explor. Fund it is placed due S. of Jerusalem, on the road to Bethlehem, between Mar Elias and Rachel's Tomb.

23. *Anathoth*] One of the towns assigned to the priests (Jos. xxi. 18; 1 Chron. vi. 60), the dwelling-place of Abiathar the high-priest (1 Kings ii. 26) and of the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. i. 1, xxix. 27). See Is. x. 28, 30.

It is situated about 4 miles N.E. of Jerusalem, the modern *Anata*.

The name shows that the place in prehistoric times was a centre for the worship of the goddess Anath or Anta.

24. *Azmaveth*] Cf. Neh. xii. 29: called Beth-Azmaveth Neh. vii. 28; has been conjecturally identified with El-Hizmeh, a height N. of Anathoth. The name of Azmaveth occurs in the register of the tribe of Benjamin (1 Chron. viii. 36).

25. *Kirjath-arim, Chephirah, and Beeroth*] Gibeonite cities, see Josh. ix. 17 'Now their cities were Gibeon, and Chephirah, and Beeroth, and

three. The children of Ramah and Gaba, six hundred twenty and one. The men of Michmas, an hundred twenty and two. The men of Beth-el and Ai, two hundred twenty

Kiriath-jearim' (R.V.) 'Kirjath-arim' (**Kiriath-arim** R.V.) called in Neh. vii. 29 Kiriath-jearim, or 'the city of the woods'. The spelling in our verse is probably due to an early error in the text. Its former name was Baalah (Jos. xv. 9). It was assigned to Judah and lay on the border of Judah and Benjamin. The ark rested here after it had been restored by the Philistines (1 Sam. vi. 21, vii. 1), and David brought it from here to Jerusalem (1 Chron. xiii. 5, 6; 2 Chron. i. 4; 2 Sam. vi. 2, 'Baale Judah,' cf. Jos. xviii. 14). From the description given in Jos. xv. 8—11 it must have been situate about 9 miles N.W. of Jerusalem. Chephirah, modern *Kefireh*, a little N. of Kiriath.

Beeroth]='wells', the native place of the two Benjamite assassins of Ishbosheth, Baanah and Rechab (2 Sam. iv. 2), now known as Bireh 12 miles N. of Jerusalem on the road to Nablûs. It is here that according to tradition the child Jesus was first missed by Joseph and Mary (Luke ii. 44).

26. *Ramah*] the dwelling-place of Samuel (1 Sam. vii. 17) and afterwards a frontier-fortress on the borders of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms (1 Kings xv. 17, 22); the modern Er-râm about 6 miles N. of Jerusalem.

Gaba] R.V. **Geba**. One of the priestly towns in the tribe of Benjamin (cf. Jos. xviii. 24 with xxi. 17: 1 Chron. viii. 6 with vi. 60), on the frontiers of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, 2 Kings xxiii. 8; fortified by Asa out of material obtained from Ramah, 1 Kings xv. 22: distant some 8 miles N. of Jerusalem, modern *Jeba*.

27. *Michmas*] in the tribe of Benjamin, on a hill overlooking the gorge of the same name, which was the scene of Jonathan's victory over the Philistines (1 Sam. xiii. 23, xiv.). It was evidently a strong situation (cf. 1 Sam. xiii. 2, 5, 16). Geba was on the S., Michmash on the N. side of the gorge. This agrees with the passage in Isai. x. 28, 29 where the march of an invading Assyrian army from the N. is described, 'At Michmash he layeth up his baggage: they are gone over the pass; they have taken up their lodging at Geba: Ramah trembleth'.

28. *Beth-el*] one of the most ancient towns in the country (cf. Jos. xii. 9), called Luz 'at the first' and famous in the history of the Patriarch Jacob (Gen. xxviii. 19, xxxv. 15), captured from the Canaanites by Ephraim (Judg. i. 22—26), situated on the borders of Ephraim and Benjamin (Jos. xvi. 1, xviii. 13, 22). It was reputed of special sanctity. We find the ark at Beth-el (Judg. xx. 18, 26, 27). It was included in Samuel's circuit (1 Sam. vii. 16). It was the home of one of 'the schools of the prophets' (2 Kings ii. 3). It was selected by Jeroboam as the southern sanctuary for the calf-worship which he instituted (1 Kings xii. 28 &c.). Thenceforth its name chiefly occurs in connexion with the sins of idolatry (Amos iii. 14; 2 Kings xxiii. 15).

It is about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles N.E. of Beeroth. Its site is generally identified with the extensive ruins of Beitin.

29, 30 and three. The children of Nebo, fifty and two. The
31 children of Magbish, an hundred fifty and six. The children
of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four.
32, 33 The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty. The

Ai] E. of Beth-el (Gen. xii. 8; Jos. vii. 2), an ancient royal town (Jos. xii. 9) destroyed by Joshua (Jos. vii., viii.), but afterwards rebuilt. It is called Aiath in Isai. x. 28, in which passage its position shows that it lay to the N. of Michmash. In Neh. xi. 31 it appears as Aija. The name denotes 'ruinous heaps' and thus corresponds with *Tell-el-Ḥajar* ('mound of stones'), a place about 2½ miles S. E. of Bethel, on the S. side of the Wadi-el-Mat-yâ, from which the path leads through the hills to Jericho. In the Pal. Expl. map it is identified with *Khan Haiyan*, 2570 ft. high, E. of Beeroth, and S. of *Dêr Diwân*.

29. *Nebo*] not to be confused with the Moabite town (Num. xxxii. 3, 38), to distinguish it from which it is perhaps called in Neh. vii. 33 'the other Nebo'. Its situation has not been accurately determined. Some identify it with Nob, the well-known priestly town (see 1 Sam. xxi. 1, xxii. 9 &c.), and in favour of this view it may be noticed that while Nob is mentioned along with Geba, Michmash, Ai, Bethel and Anathoth in Neh. xi. 31 and 32, and after Ai, Michmash, Geba, Ramah and Anathoth in Isai. x. 28—32, Nebo is not mentioned in either passage. The position of Nob is still uncertain.

Nebo and Nob have been recognised in Beit Nuba, a village on a hill about 16 miles N. W. N. of Jerusalem, but certainly erroneously. The site must be looked for on, or near Mt. Scopus, on the N. of Jerusalem; by some identified with the modern village *Isâwiyeh*.

Nebo is the name of a well-known Assyrian deity. The name of the place perhaps indicates that in a prehistoric time the worship of this god was maintained here (see note on 'Anathoth' ver. 23).

30. *Magbish*] The name of this place is omitted in the parallel passages and does not occur elsewhere. Presumably another town in the territory of Benjamin.

31. *the other Elam*] This title apparently refers back to the Elam mentioned in ver. 7. The fact that the 'Elam' of ver. 7 is probably the name of a person and that the Elam here mentioned is found in connexion with the names of towns renders the expression 'the other' very strange. Another strange circumstance is the exact correspondence of the numbers in each case, i.e. 1254. The text is not free from suspicion.

32. *Harim*] not to be confounded with the Harim of ver. 39. The family name mentioned in this verse occurs again in chap. x. 31.

The three verses 30, 31, 32 call for special remark. (*a*) Magbish does not occur in the parallel lists: (*b*) 'Elam' and 'Harim' are names of people not of towns: (*c*) the list in 1 Esdras v. 21, 22 passes at once from Nephis (=Nebo) to Calamolus (=Lod, Hadid and Ono): (*d*) the name of 'Harim' apparently is inserted as 'Arom' in 1 Esdr. v. 16, with 32 instead of 320 persons.

We have here the traces of an early confusion in the text. It is not improbable that ver. 31 is an accidental repetition of ver. 7 and that

children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred twenty and five. The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and 34
five. The children of Senaah, three thousand and six 35
hundred and thirty.

The priests: the children of Jedaiah, of the house of 36

ver. 32 has been detached from its place in the first portion of the register (3—19).

33. *Lod, Hadid, and Ono*] These names occur also in Neh. xi. 34, 35. Lod and Ono built by Shemed a Benjamite (1 Chr. viii. 12). The name of 'Lod' does not elsewhere occur in the history before the Captivity. It is the same as Lydda, familiar to us in the Acts of the Apostles (ix. 32 &c.). It stands on the great road leading down to Egypt, about 7 miles S. E. of Joppa.

Hadid, probably the same as Adida (1 Macc. xii. 38, xiii. 13), a fortress on the E. of the Shephêlah, the modern 'el Chadîtheh', commanding one of the valleys leading up from the plain to Jerusalem.

Ono] has been identified with the modern Kefr Ana, about 6 miles N. of Lydda. Ono and Lod are mentioned as included in Benjamite territory 1 Chron. viii. 12.

34. *Jericho*] or the city of palms (Deut. xxxiv. 3; Judg. i. 16; 2 Chron. xxviii. 15), destroyed by Joshua (Jos. vi.), rebuilt by Hiel the Bethelite in the days of Ahab (1 Kings xvi. 34) and apparently included in the Northern Kingdom. It was the home of one of the schools of the prophets (2 Kings ii. 5).

It is now called Rîcha or Ericha. It is distant about 18 miles E. from Jerusalem, and 1½ W. from the Jordan.

35. *Senaah*] The name of this place occurs elsewhere only in the lists of Nehemiah (iii. 3, vii. 38). It was identified by Eusebius and Jerome with 'Megdalsenna' or 'Magdalsenna' about 5 miles N. of Jericho.

three thousand and six hundred and thirty] Neh. gives a larger number by 300. The numbers here mentioned are surprisingly great considering that the town is quite unknown to us.

The difficulty has been met by a variety of explanations. (*a*) It has been said that we need not attach much importance to the figures, which may easily have suffered from corruptions in the text. (*b*) It is suggested that the numbers comprise the population of a considerable adjoining district. (*c*) It was even conjectured by one commentator (Michaelis) that Senaah was a title (="the hated one") given to Jerusalem with reference to its idolatry before the Captivity. (*d*) Perhaps the number here given includes the population of other places, e.g. Hebron, whose names have been accidentally omitted.

36—39. The names and numbers of the houses of the priests correspond exactly in the three registers.

36. *the children of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua*] In the 24 Priestly houses enumerated in 1 Chron. xxiv. 7—18, the house of Jedaiah stands second.

The words 'of the house of Jeshua' have been differently explained.

37 Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three. The children of
38 Immer, a thousand fifty and two. The children of Pashur,
39 a thousand two hundred forty and seven. The children of
Harim, a thousand and seventeen.

40 The Levites: the children of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of

(*a*) It has been considered to refer to a very ancient house from which sprang two branches, the family of Jedaiah mentioned here and 1 Chron. xxiv. 7, and the family of Jeshua mentioned as the ninth priestly house in 1 Chron. xxiv. 11. (*b*) The Jeshua here spoken of is considered to be the High-priest; 'the sons of Jedaiah were a portion of the house to which J. the high-priest belonged...Jedaiah is not the name of the second order of priests, but of the head of a family of the high-priestly race (Keil).

(*c*) But as the name of Jedaiah is followed by that of Immer, the sixteenth priestly house (1 Chron. xxiv. 14), it is more natural to suppose that 'the children of Jedaiah' were members of the second priestly house. The explanation of the passage is supplied by the similar twofold genealogical reference given in verses 6 and 16. The house is mentioned first and then follows its limitation to a special branch or family.

Here the *house* is the priestly house of Jedaiah; the *branch* or *family* is that of Jeshua. This Jeshua belonged probably to some former generation, but gave his name to a particular branch of the house of Jedaiah.

The difficulty occasioned by this verse has arisen from the desire to identify this Jeshua with the High-priest and from the mistake of supposing that the names of the heads of families were necessarily the companions of Zerubbabel instead of being rather the distinctive names of clans.

37. *Immer*] The sixteenth priestly house (1 Chron. xxiv. 14). Pashur, the enemy of Jeremiah, is mentioned as a member of this house (Jer. xx. 1). See also Neh. iii. 29.

38. *Pashur*] This name does not occur among the 24 priestly houses. But a Pashur is mentioned 1 Chron. ix. 12; Neh. xi. 12 as the son of Malchiah, and the name of 'Malchiah' is given to the fifth priestly house (1 Chron. xxiv. 9). Either Pashur the son of Malchiah, a prominent man in the court of king Zedekiah (Jer. xxi. 1 and xxxviii. 1), gave his name to the *branch* of the house of Malchiah which returned with Zerubbabel: or the whole priestly house of Malchiah became known by the name of its distinguished member, Pashur.

39. *Harim*] The name of Harim appears in 1 Chron. xxiv. 8 as that of the third priestly house.

40—42. The Levites are here arranged in the same way as in the 1st Book of Chronicles, i.e. into (1) Levites proper (cf. 1 Chron. xxiv. 20—31). (2) Singers (cf. 1 Chron. xxv.). (3) Doorkeepers (cf. 1 Chron. xxvi. 1—19. See Introduction, § 7.

The small number (i.e. 431 in all) of the Levites is very striking by the side of the 4289 priests. Upon the backwardness of the Levites to return to Jerusalem compare note on chap. viii. 15, and see Introduction.

the children of Hodaviah, seventy and four. The singers: 41
the children of Asaph, an hundred twenty and eight. The 42
children of the porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, the children of Shobai, *in* all an hundred thirty and nine.

40. *the children of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the children of Hodaviah*] The occurrence of these names in Neh. x. 9 shows that, as throughout this list, we have here the titles of families, not necessarily the names of Zerubbabel's contemporaries. In chap. iii. 9 Jeshua and Kadmiel are mentioned as leading Levites.

of the children of Hodaviah] 'Hodaviah' appears as 'Judah' in iii. 9 and as 'Hodevah' in Neh. vii. 43.

Some apply these words, 'of the children of Hodaviah', to both Jeshua and Kadmiel, making them both branches of the more ancient but otherwise unknown family of Hodaviah: others to 'Kadmiel' alone, in order to distinguish this Kadmiel from others of the same name. The decision must turn upon our explanation of iii. 9 (see note),—and on the whole it seems best to regard the clause as belonging to Kadmiel especially, and as signifying a closer limitation of that family. Thus the Levites comprised the family of Jeshua and those members of the Kadmiel family who belonged to the Hodaviah branch.

41. *The singers*] The Levitical order of singers was instituted in David's time (1 Chron. xv. 17—24). There seem to have been 24 classes of singers (1 Chron. xxv. 9—31). But the three great guilds of singers were called after the names of Heman the Kohathite, Asaph the Gershomite, and Jeduthun the Merarite (1 Chron. vi. 33—47, xxv. 1—7).

Asaph] No members of the Heman and Jeduthun guilds seem to have returned. Four of the 24 classes of singers were called after the sons of Asaph, i.e. the first, Joseph: the third, Zaccur: the fifth, Nethaniah: the seventh, Jesharelah (1 Chron. xxv. 2, 9, 10, 12, 14). Asaph himself enjoyed a great reputation as a Psalmist (cf. 2 Chron. xxix. 30, Neh. xii. 46). The inscriptions of certain Psalms attribute their composition to Asaph (Ps. l., lxxiii.—lxxxiii.).

42. *the porters*] so also R.V.; although it is noteworthy that having substituted 'door-keepers' for 'porters' (A.V.) in 1 Chron. xxvi. 1, the R.V. has not for the sake of consistency made a similar alteration here, the word in Hebrew being the same in both instances. The door-keepers mentioned here and in 1 Chron. xxvi. 1—19 are Levites: possibly the name 'porters' was preserved to distinguish the *Levitical* attendants from the *priestly* door-keepers (or more literally 'keepers of the threshold') mentioned in 2 Kings xxv. 18, Jer. xxxv. 4. Compare Ps. lxxxiv. 10 'I had rather be a doorkeeper in (marg.: 'stand at the threshold of') the house of my God'.

The names are clearly the names of households or courses, since Shallum, Akkub and Talmon are mentioned in 1 Chron. ix. 17, and Akkub and Talmon are referred to in Neh. xi. 19.

43 The Nethinims: the children of Ziha, the children of
44 Hasupha, the children of Tabbaoth, the children of Keros,
45 the children of Siaha, the children of Padon, the children of
Lebanah, the children of Hagabah, the children of Akkub,
46 the children of Hagab, the children of Shalmai, the children

43—54. Nethinim. This class is mentioned in the books Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezr. ii. 43, 58, 70, vii. 7, 24, viii. 17, 20; Neh. iii. 26, 31, vii. 46, 60, 73, x. 28, xi. 3, 21) and only once elsewhere (1 Chron. ix. 2). From these passages it is evident that the Nethinim were a class subordinate to the Levites but ranking before 'the servants of Solomon' (ver. 55) in the services of the Temple. Their origin is hid in great obscurity. The name denotes 'given'. Jewish tradition identified them mainly with the Gibeonites, who had been assigned by Joshua to the Levites to assist them in the discharge of the more menial tasks (Jos. ix. 3—27). Their numbers were also, according to this supposition, increased by the captives taken in war, of whom a certain proportion were given over to the priests and Levites as their share in the booty of a campaign (Num. xxxi. 28 &c.). Thus in Ezr. viii. 20 we find a mention of certain of this class 'whom David and the princes had appointed (lit. 'given') for the service of the Levites'.

The later Jewish tradition of the Talmud spoke of the Nethinim with great contempt and forbade intermarriage between them and the Jews. It is not improbable that these expressions were employed long after this distinctive class had been lost to view, and merely reflected the tradition which ascribed their origin to the Gibeonites and the Canaanites who fell under the special ban of the Law (Ex. xxxiv. 12—16; Deut. vii. 1 &c.).

A recent theory, coupling the strong terms of Jewish hatred with the numerous feminine terminations in *-a* and *-ah* to be found in the genealogy of the Nethinim, supposes them to be the descendants of those who during the monarchy had led infamous lives in the precincts and vicinity of the Temple as devotees of Astarte and of Ashera (see *Babyl. and Orient. Record*, Feb., March 1888). But even if it were granted that the very odium of their origin would thus account for the mystery in which it is veiled, it does not seem probable that the strict notions which prevailed at the time of the Return would have admitted such a class to participate in the ministrations, however lowly, of the Temple.

The peculiar termination of the names derives a natural explanation from their foreign extraction.

43. *Nethinims*] R.V. **Nethinim.** The termination '-im' is the sign of the plural. In the same way the R.V. corrects the inaccurate form 'Cherubims' to 'Cherubim' (Gen. iii. 24), 'Anakims' to 'Anakim', 'Horims' to 'Horites', 'Emims' to 'Emim', 'Zanzummims' to 'Zanzummim', 'Avims' and 'Caphtorims' to 'Avvim' and 'Caphtorim' (Deut. ii. 10—12, 20—23).

44. *Siaha*] called 'Sia' in Neh. vii. 47.

46. *Shalmai*] R.V. **Shamlai.** Called 'Salmai' in Neh. vii. 48.

of Hanan, the children of Giddel, the children of Gahar, 47
the children of Reaiah, the children of Rezin, the children 48
of Nekoda, the children of Gazzam, the children of Uzza, 49
the children of Paseah, the children of Besai, the children 50
of Asnah, the children of Mehunim, the children of Nephusim, the children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, 51
the children of Harhur, the children of Bazluth, the children 52
of Mehida, the children of Harsha, the children of Barkos, 53
the children of Sisera, the children of Thamah, the children 54
of Neziah, the children of Hatipha.

The children of Solomon's servants: the children of 55

48. *Nekoda*] see the same name ver. 60.

50. *the children of Mehunim*] R.V. **Meunim**. These have been identified with the Maonites who oppressed the children of Israel in the days of the Judges (Judg. x. 12). It is very possible that the Meunim were leagued with the Moabites and Ammonites against Jehoshaphat (2 Chr. xx. 1). Uzziah obtained the mastery over the Meunim (2 Chron. xxvi. 7). Very possibly it is the descendants of the Meunim whom Uzziah made prisoners, to whom the verse refers.

If this be so, the Meunim were the people of Maon, Bedouins like the Midianites, having their headquarters south of the Dead Sea, not far from Petra.

the children of Nephusim] R.V. **Nephisim**. Both readings are found. The LXX. has Νεφουσίμ. 'Nephisim' seems the most probable, since we naturally incline to identify the name with the clan of Naphish, the Israelite or Arab mentioned in Gen. xxv. 15; 1 Chron. i. 31. From another passage, 1 Chron. v. 18—22, we learn that they with others belonged to the tribe of Hagrites (A.V. Hagarites) and experienced defeat, followed by wholesale massacre and captivity, at the hands of the Transjordanic tribes Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh.

In Neh. vii. 52 they are called 'Nephushesim'.

52. *Bazluth*] called 'Bazlith' in Neh. vii. 54.

53. *Sisera*] possibly from the inhabitants of Northern Canaan (cf. Judg. iv. 2).

Thamah] R.V. **Temah**, possibly referring to an Arabian clan (cf. Gen. xxv. 15; 1 Chron. i. 30). Whether we should look for this Tema in the N. of Arabia or identify it with Taima in the Hauran is still uncertain. See Job vi. 19; Isai. xxi. 14.

55—58. Solomon's servants, a class similar to the Nethinim, with whom they are also found in conjunction Neh. vii. 60, xi. 3. They are apparently included under the more general term Nethinim in such passages as Neh. x. 28. They have been traditionally understood to be the descendants of those inhabitants of the land 'that were left of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites' of whom Solomon had hired 'bondservants' for the work of building his temple (1 Kings v. 13).

56 Sotai, the children of Sophereth, the children of Peruda, the
children of Jaalah, the children of Darkon, the children of
57 Giddel, the children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil,
the children of Pochereth of Zebaim, the children of Ami.
58 All the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants,
were three hundred ninety and two.
59 And these *were* they which went up from Tel-melah,
Tel-harsa, Cherub, Addan, *and* Immer: but they could not
shew their fathers' house, and their seed, whether they *were*
60 of Israel: the children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah,
61 the children of Nekoda, six hundred fifty and two. And of
the children of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the

55. *Sophereth*] R.V. **Hassophereth.** The A.V. gives the name as it appears in Neh. vii. 57.

Peruda] appears in Neh. vii. 57 as 'Perida'.

57. *Pochereth of Zebaim*] R.V. **Pochereth-hazzebaim.** The name denotes 'the gazelle hunter'. The LXX., quite misunderstanding the title, gives two names, 'the children of Pacherad, the children of Aseboim' (*υἱοὶ Φαχεράδ, υἱοὶ Ἀσεβωίμ*).

Ami] appears in Neh. vii. 59 as 'Amon'.

59—63. ISRAELITES AND PRIESTS OF UNCERTAIN GENEALOGY.

59. *Tel-melah, Tel-harsa*] R.V., **Tel-melah, Tel-harsha** i.e. Salt-hill and Forest-hill, probably names of localities in Babylonia.

Cherub, Addan, and *Immer*] These are names not of people, but, in all probability, of three villages in one district of Babylonia. Rawlinson suggests that Cherub is the Cheripha of Ptolemy, and that Tel-melah is Telme.

There are then three districts, Tel-melah, Tel-harsa, and Cherub-Addan-Immer, from which came the three families Delaiah, Tobiah and Nekoda.

Addan] appears in Neh. vii. 59 'Addon'.

their fathers' house] **their fathers' houses** R.V. They were able to show their recent ancestry, but not their descent from the great clans or households into which the tribes were divided. They could not prove either of the two greatest essentials in a Jewish genealogy, their place in the household or their membership in a tribe.

This technical failure to produce their genealogy probably deprived them of the full rights of citizenship. They were not refused participation in the Return. But the names do not appear in later lists, Ezr. x. 25—43; Neh. x. 1—27.

60. *Nekoda*] See verse 48. The occurrence of the same name in two places may be accidental. But it is possible that the family of Nekoda which ranked among the Nethinim sought to establish a claim to a place among the free-born Israelites.

61. *Habaiah*] This name appears in Neh. vii. 63 as 'Hobaiah'. R.V.

children of Koz, the children of Barzillai; which took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their name: these sought their register *among* 62
those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood. And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should 63

Koz] R.V. **'Hakkoz'.** This name appears as that of the *seventh* priestly course in 1 Chron. xxiv. 10.

of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite] Barzillai, the rich and noble Gileadite who assisted David during his flight from his son Absalom. Barzillai's son Chimham accompanied David to Jerusalem on his return (2 Sam. xvii. 27, xix. 32 ff.; 1 Kings ii. 7). Chimham probably founded a family called after his own name, which resided at Bethlehem (Jer. xli. 17). Barzillai's position and estates in Gilead were inherited by his daughters, through whom their father's name was preserved. One of them was married to a priest, who thereupon received the family name. His descendants however were unable to make out their claim to belong to the priesthood; possibly on account of the confusion resulting from the altered name.

The R.V. places a full stop at the close of this verse.

62. *these sought their register* &c.] Literally 'These sought their writing (LXX. γραφὴν αὐτῶν), the enrolled', i.e. they searched for their genealogy in the priestly book, which went by the name of 'The Enrolled', or as we should now call it 'The Register'. Compare 'the writing (mrg. 'register') of the house of Israel' in Ezek. xiii. 9, where the same word is used in the original.

therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood] R.V. **therefore were they deemed polluted and put from the priesthood.** The margin *Heb. 'they were polluted from the priesthood'* gives the literal rendering. To be declared polluted was equivalent to being excluded from any active part in the office and administration of the priesthood. They were to be accounted 'polluted', until their claim could be established.

The importance attached to the genealogical accuracy of the claims preferred to the priesthood is not only a symptom of the legal spirit which animated the Jews of the Return. It goes back to the abolition of the High Places firstly by Hezekiah and afterwards by Josiah, in consequence of which a sharp distinction was drawn between those who had ministered at the High Places and those who were engaged in the Temple worship at Jerusalem. This point is illustrated by the writings of Ezekiel, himself a priest, who writing during the Captivity distinguishes between 'the priests the Levites that be of the seed of Zadok' (xliii. 19; cf. xl. 46, xliv. 14, xlviii. 11) and the 'Levites that went astray' (xliv. 10, 13, 15, xlviii. 11).

63. *the Tirshatha*] This title is here and in Neh. vii. 65, 70 apparently applied to Zerubbabel: Haggai his contemporary calls him 'Pekhah' (=Governor), see Hag. i. 1, 14, ii. 2, 21. In the same way Nehemiah, who is called the Tirshatha, Neh. viii. 9, x. 1, is also spoken

not eat of the most holy *things* till there stood *up* a priest with Urim and with Thummim.

of as 'Pekhah' in Neh. xii. 26. 'Pekhah' was the Babylonian, 'Tirshatha' the Persian title for a local or provincial governor. The governors were subject to the satraps, the satraps were responsible to the king.

The word 'Tirshatha' is said to be the same as the Persian 'tarsâta', from 'tars' to fear, and to denote complimentarily the awe which the office inspired.

That the 'Tirshatha' here mentioned was Zerubbabel is rendered probable by the nature of the prohibition contained in this verse, which none but a *native* Governor or the High-priest himself would have issued.

that they should not eat of the most holy things] The priests were especially required to eat of the 'meal-offering' (Lev. ii. 3, 10, vi. 18), the sin offering (Lev. vi. 26), the guilt offering (Lev. vii. 6), and of the peace offering (Lev. vii. 31—34). Certain portions were set aside for the sons of Aaron. The prohibition therefore refers to the ceremonial rules already in force. 'The most holy things' is a phrase which can best be illustrated from Num. xviii. 9—11.

The consecration of a priest was accompanied by the sacrifice of a ram which Aaron and his sons should eat. Ex. xxix. 33—37.

A priest excluded from eating of 'the most holy things' was therefore only a priest by title and lineage. He could not be consecrated (see Ex. xxix.), he could not offer sacrifices, he could not enter the holy place.

He was excluded apparently more rigidly than the priest 'that hath a blemish', who was forbidden to 'come nigh to offer the bread of his God. He *shall eat the bread of his God, both of the most holy, and of the holy*. Only he shall not go in unto the veil, nor come nigh unto the altar' (Lev. xxi. 21—23).

The distinction here made between the 'most holy' and the 'holy' is important. 'The most holy' included the shewbread, the incense, the sin and guilt offering, the drink offering. 'The holy' comprised the thank-offering, the firstlings of herd and flock, the first-fruits, the tithe. Of 'the holy' things members of the priests' families might partake. But ceremonial cleanness was in all cases needed.

The declaration of 'defilement' excluded those who were defiled from a source of priestly income as well as from the dignity of priestly occupation.

till there stood up *a priest with Urim and with Thummim*] In former times the High-priest had enquired of the Lord by Urim and Thummim. After the Captivity, the High-priest had no Urim and Thummim. The Urim and Thummim, along with the Ark, the Shechinah, the Holy Fire, the Spirit of Prophecy, the Oil of Anointing constituted the chief points, for the absence of which the Jews of later times deplored the deficiency of Zerubbabel's Temple as compared with that of Solomon.

The passages in which enquiry by Urim and Thummim is mentioned

The whole congregation together *was* forty *and* two 64
thousand three hundred *and* threescore, beside their ser- 65

are Ex. xxviii. 30; Lev. viii. 8; Num. xxvii. 21; Deut. xxxiii. 8; 1 Sam. xxviii. 6. In none of these do we find any explanation of what the Urim and Thummim were. They have been identified with (*a*) stones in the High-priest's breastplate, (*b*) sacred dice, (*c*) little images of 'truth' and 'justice' such as are found hung round the neck of an Egyptian priest's mummy.

The writers of the Scriptures have abstained from explanation either because they shrank from making generally known what was regarded with mystery and awe, or because they presupposed their readers' familiarity with the thing referred to.

The want of Urim and Thummim is not, as Ewald supposed, due to any technical defect in Jeshua's claim to High-priestly dignity (such as that he was not his father's eldest son). And this passage tacitly contradicts the assertion of Josephus, that the Urim and Thummim only first failed in the Maccabean era.

The Tirshatha indefinitely postponed the decision. Where documentary proofs were wanting, none but one favoured with Divine perception could pronounce sentence. The words are of importance because they testify to the feeling that the people felt the need of revelation from God, and that they looked forward to the coming of some great High-priest to whom God should make Himself known. They point forward to the coming of *the* High-Priest 'full of grace and truth'.

Compare 1 Macc. iv. 46 'Until there should come a prophet to show what should be done with them', xiv. 41 'Until there should arise a faithful prophet.'

The words 'Urim' and 'Thummim' mean 'Light' and 'Perfection.' The LXX renders them in this passage by τοῖς φωτίζουσιν καὶ τοῖς τελείοις; more generally by δήλωσις or δῆλοι and ἀλήθεια.

64. The same total i.e. 42,360 is given in Ezra, Nehemiah and 1 Esdras. The items however fail in all three lists to produce this figure.

	Ezra	*Neh.*	1 *Esdr.*
Men of the people of Israel	24,144	25,406	26,390
Priests	4289	4289	2388
Levites	74	74	74
Singers	128	148	128
Porters	139	138	139
Nethinim and Solomon's servants	392	392	372
Unregistered	652	642	652
Total	29,818	31,089	30,143
		other MSS.	30,678

These remarkable discrepancies from the sum total in which there is so much agreement have been variously accounted for. (*a*) Jewish interpreters have supposed that the sum total comprised members of the ten tribes who have not been enumerated: (*b*) 1 Esdr. v. 41 adds

vants and their maids, of whom *there were* seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven: and *there were* among
66 them two hundred singing *men* and singing *women*. Their

the words 'of twelve years old and upward', and the unlikely suggestion has been made that the numbers of the totals include all over 12 years of age, although the numbers of the items included all over 20 years of age. (*c*) The disagreement is considered to be due to the corruptions in the text arising from copyists' errors in transcription of numbers and signs for numbers.

Of these explanations the last seems the most probable. But it is undoubtedly strange that the three disagreeing sum totals should come within 2000 of one another and yet should fall so far short of the total figure which each text has preserved.

65. *their servants and their maids*] R.V. **their menservants and their maidservants**, which is more accurate.

and there were *among them*] R.V. and **they had**. The R.V. is certainly right. The meaning is not that singing men and women were included among the servants, but that 'the whole congregation' (ver. 64) had in attendance, besides their servants, their troop of singers.

singing men *and singing* women] The mention of these has caused some difficulty. (1) Singers have already been mentioned (ver. 41). (2) It has been thought that mention of cattle would be expected by the side of the other beasts. The suggestion has been made that we ought to read 'oxen' (sh'vârim) for 'singing men' (shōr'rim), that the latter word having been introduced by a copyist's error, the words 'and singing women' were added to give completeness to the verse. The conjecture is ingenious but is based on a misapprehension. (1) The singers mentioned in ver. 41 are a Levitical guild, set apart for the Temple services. The singers mentioned here are professionals employed at banquets, feasts &c., or funerals (2 Chron. xxxv. 25). Such 'singing men and singing women' often belonged to the most degraded class. There is nothing strange then in their being mentioned after the menservants and maidservants. A passage in Ecclesiastes ii. 7, 8 exemplifies their position 'I bought menservants and maidens...; also I had great possessions of herds and flocks...: I gathered me also silver and gold...: I gat me *men singers and women singers* and the delights of the sons of men, concubines very many.' The possession of professional singers was clearly a sign of luxury (cf. 2 Sam. xix. 35). The mention of them shows that there were several very wealthy men among the 'congregation'. But it is only natural that their place in the list should follow after the mention of the ordinary servants. (2) There is no need here to introduce 'cattle'. The animals mentioned in the context are beasts of burden (see chap. i. 4, 6). 'Oxen' would be out of place in the list. We are told nothing of the flocks and herds, which the people brought with them. And if it be objected that oxen were used as beasts of burden, it may fairly be answered (*a*) that they would scarcely be mentioned first in the list, (*b*) that

horses *were* seven hundred thirty and six; their mules, two hundred forty and five; their camels, four hundred thirty 67
and five; *their* asses, six thousand seven hundred and twenty.

where they are found in a list (1 Chron. xii. 40) they are mentioned last and by a different name. The number of singers here mentioned is 200. In Neh. vii. 67 and 1 Esdr. v. 42 it is 245, in all probability a copyist's error whose eye had caught the number '245' in the verse following.

66. *horses*] The number mentioned here (736) appears in 1 Esdras v. 43 as 7036, a fair sample of the way in which figures could easily undergo alteration by accident or intention.

Before this time we do not find mention of the use of the horse among the Israelites for peaceful purposes. Hitherto the horse had been used for war and for pomp. The considerable number here mentioned is another proof of the presence of considerable wealth. The horse was the possession of the rich and well armed.

mules] About one-third the number of the horses. During the monarchy the mule is the royal animal (1 Kings i. 33, 38, 44). The mule was scarce and precious like the horse (1 Kings xviii. 5). To be carried by a mule is classed with being carried by a horse or on a litter or in a chariot (Isai. lxvi. 20). They were not bred in Palestine. Solomon imported them (1 Kings x. 25; 2 Chr. ix. 24). The mules here mentioned were probably ridden by the richest class. In the O.T. we do not read of the mule carrying loads.

67. *camels*] The camel is mentioned in the O.T. chiefly as the beast of burden of nomad families and races, e.g. Ishmaelites (Gen. xxxvii. 25), Midianites and Amalekites (Judg. vi. 5; 1 Sam. xxx. 17). It would be the most serviceable of all beasts for the long journey from Babylon, on account of its great endurance and its capacity for carrying heavy weights.

The camel here spoken of is probably of Arabian breed. It is what we should call the 'dromedary' or one-humped camel.

Camels would be in frequent use in Babylon. Several Assyrian sculptures have been preserved in which we may see that the camel then as now was the favourite beast both of merchants and of robbers (Job i. 17).

asses] Here and in Nehemiah the number is 6720, in 1 Esdr. v. 43 it is 5525. The ass was the commonest beast of burden. Unlike the horse, mule and camel, it seems from the earliest times to have been bred in Palestine. Its endurance for a long journey is greater than that of the horse. But it is not so serviceable for work in waterless regions as the mule or the camel. Asses are mentioned along with camels and horsemen in Isaiah's prophecy of the fall of Babylon (Isai. xxi. 7).

These four beasts of burden are mentioned in the same order in Zech. xiv. 15. The horses and mules would be ridden by the wealthier, asses by the poorer classes. The camels and asses would carry the baggage.

68 And *some* of the chief of the fathers, when they came to
the house of the LORD which *is* at Jerusalem, offered
69 freely for the house of God to set it up in his place: they
gave after their ability unto the treasure of the work three-

68, 69. This passage is given in greater accuracy of detail in Neh. vii. 70—72.

68. some *of the chief of the fathers*] R.V. **some of the heads of fathers' houses,** see note on i. 5.

when they came to the house of the LORD *which* is *at Jerusalem*] i.e. on their arrival at Jerusalem, where they were to rebuild the Temple. 'The house of the Lord', the site and the building are identified by the writer; if still in ruins, the house was about to be rebuilt, cf. i. 4, 5, iii. 8, 9. In the writer's mind 'the house of the Lord' is always standing at Jerusalem.

offered freely] R.V. **offered willingly.** There was no reason for the A.V. to alter the rendering given in i. 6. The freewill offering was offered willingly (see iii. 5); the adverb 'freely' introduces an ambiguity.

to set it up] lit. 'to cause it to stand'=to restore; the expression recurs chap. ix. 9.

69. *they gave* &c.] There is a slight discrepancy between the sums mentioned in this verse and the sums recorded in greater detail in Nehemiah. The figures stand thus—

Ezra

Heads of fathers' houses 61,000 darics of gold
5,000 pounds of silver
100 priests' garments.

Nehemiah

	darics of gold	basons	pounds silver	priests' garments
Tirshatha	1,000	50	500?	30
Heads of fathers' houses	20,000		2,200	
Rest of people	20,000		2,000	67
Total	41,000		4,700	97

The contributions as described in Ezra are all placed to the credit of the heads of fathers' houses; in Nehemiah we find a considerable portion contributed by the Tirshatha and by the rest of the people.

(*a*) The 61,000 darics of gold appear to consist of the Tirshatha's 1000+other contributions of which we are able to identify 40,000 (i.e. 20,000 given by heads of fathers' houses+20,000 given by the rest of the people). Perhaps the value of 50 basons and of the other gifts amounted to a figure which could be described in round numbers as 20,000.

(*b*) The 5,000 pounds of silver express in round numbers the 2,200 contributed by the heads of fathers' houses+the 2,000 by the rest of the people+500 pounds silver given by the Tirshatha (the probable reading of Neh. vii. 70).

score and one thousand drams *of* gold, and five thousand pound *of* silver, and one hundred priests' garments. So the 70

(*c*) The 100 priests' garments represent the 30 given by the Tirshatha (probable reading of Neh. vii. 70), and the 67 given by the rest of the people.

after their ability] literally 'strength' or 'power' as in Dan. i. 4: not elsewhere of 'wealth'. The word rendered 'ability' in Neh. v. 8 is different and denotes 'sufficiency'.

unto the treasure] R.V. **into the treasury.**

drams] R.V. **darics.** The A.V. translation 'dram' seems to suppose that the coin spoken of was the Greek 'drachma'. It is in reality the well-known Persian gold coin 'daric'. The name has commonly been derived from the Darius who was said to have first had the piece coined. But this is far from certain. The word 'daric' more probably refers to the emblem on the coin, and is to be derived either from a Persian word meaning 'a bow', or from 'dara' = 'a king', cf. our 'sovereign'. The obverse side of the coin has the figure of a crowned king, kneeling, holding in his right hand a sceptre or spear and in his left a bow; for the sake possibly of securing a good impression, the reverse of the coin was left rough.

The 'daric' is transliterated into Hebrew as 'Adarcon' in chap. viii. 27; 1 Chron. xxix. 7: but in this verse and in Neh. vii. 70—72 it appears as 'Darcemon' with a various reading 'Adarcemon'.

Its value was as nearly as possible equivalent to our sovereign. The coin is by some identified with the gold *stater* of Crœsus, the last king of Lydia. This is the first mention of *coined* money in the Old Testament, as the reference to 'darics' in David's reign (1 Chron. xxix. 7) is strictly an anachronism.

pound] Hebr. 'maneh'. We do not find in the Old Testament any mention of Persian silver coinage. Before the Persian period, Hebrew money had for the most part been calculated *by weight* upon something akin to the Babylonian system, by 'talent', 'maneh', 'shekel'.

A 'talent' of Hebrew money consisted of '50 manim', one maneh of 60 shekels.

priests' garments] The priests differed from the Levites in having special garments 'in which they ministered' and which they put off as being holy, as soon as they had ceased from their ministrations (Levit. vi. 10; Ezek. xlii. 14, xliv. 19). The priestly garments are briefly enumerated in Ex. xxviii. 40, xxxix. 27. They consisted of (1) a long coat or tunic, (2) a mitre or turban, (3) breeches or nether garments, (4) a girdle. The material was fine linen, and the colour white. These garments the priest appears to have laid aside and deposited in one of the chambers at the entrance of the inner court of the Temple, before passing into the people's court.

70. This verse runs more smoothly as it appears in Neh. vii. 73 'So the priests and the Levites, and the porters, and the singers, and some of the people, and the Nethinim, and all Israel dwelt in their cities'.

priests, and the Levites, and *some* of the people, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities.

3 And when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel *were* in the cities, the people gathered
2 themselves together as one man to Jerusalem. Then stood

The verse sums up the whole list.

The words 'and some of the people' seem to be in the wrong place between 'the Levites' and 'the singers'; but the mention of 'the singers' before 'the porters' agrees more closely with the order of the list given in the present chapter than the order given in Neh. vii. 73.

An awkwardness is presented by the words 'in their cities' occurring twice, especially as the distinction drawn between 'some of the people with the priests and Levites' and 'all Israel' is not obvious. Some have seen in the words 'all Israel' an expression intended to combine those who had returned from captivity in Babylon with those who had remained behind in Palestine and had never been carried away captive. Others have seen in it an allusion to representatives of the 10 Tribes who were to be found among the new community, and compare it with the mention of the 12 leaders of the people in ver. 2 (cf. 1 Chr. ix. 3).

Perhaps the most probable explanation is that the text has suffered corruption and that the verse originally ran 'So the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, and some of the people, even all Israel, dwelt in their cities', or as 1 Esdr. viii. 45.

dwelt in their cities. Cf. 'returned...every one unto his city' ii. 1. The document from which this list was extracted contemplates the work of settling into their cities, which must have been a slow and gradual process, as one that had been for some time accomplished. At first only Jerusalem and the towns in the immediate neighbourhood could thus have been occupied.

Ch. III. 1—3. The Building of the Altar.

1. The first clause of this verse concludes the Register of the preceding section in Nehemiah (vii. 73).

the seventh month] Probably the 7th month in the first year of the Return, since the next recorded date (ver. 8) is the 2nd month 'in the second year of their coming unto the house of God'.

The 7th month—the month Tisri—was in some respects the most sacred in the Jewish Calendar. The 1st day was the Feast of Trumpets (Num. xxix. 1): the 10th was the Great Day of Atonement (Num. xxix. 7; Lev. xvi. 29): the 15th was the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. xxiii. 34—36, 39—44; Num. xxix. 12—38). It was therefore an appropriate season for the first religious act of the new community. 'The holy convocation' on the 1st day was to herald the new order of things.

Ps. lxxxi. very possibly commemorates the festival of 'the new moon'.

as one man] cf. Judges xx. 1; Neh. viii. 1.

up Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God. And they set the altar upon his bases; 3 for fear *was* upon them because of the people of *those*

2. *Then stood up...to offer*]
Jeshua the High-priest (cf. ii. 2) mentioned here in connexion with sacrifice, before Zerubbabel; in ver. 8 after Zerubbabel in connexion with the work of rebuilding the Temple.

Jeshua's brethren are the priests: Zerubbabel's brethren 'the heads of fathers' houses' (cf. ii. 2, 68).

Zerubbabel called here for the first time 'son of Shealtiel'. See note on ii. 2.

and builded] a ceremonious act performed by the heads of the people.

the altar of the God of Israel] cf. i. 3. We are reminded by this term of the unity of the divided and scattered people. The altar, the place of sacrifice, symbolized the approach of the whole people.

as it is written in the law of Moses] cf. vi. 18; 2 Chron. xxiii. 18, xxxv. 12, 26. The offerings for the 1st day of Tisri, the Feast of Trumpets, are described in Numbers xxix. 1—6.

the man of God] For the phrase used of Moses, cf. 1 Chron. xxiii. 14; 2 Chron. xxx. 16.

3. *upon his bases*] R.V. **upon its base.** Marg. '*in its place*'. (*a*) There is a difference of reading. The C'thib gives the singular, the K'ri the plural. The word occurs frequently in the plur. (e.g. 2 Kings xvi. 17, xxv. 13; Jer. xxvii. 19, lii. 17, 20), it is probable that the singular has been altered into the more familiar plural usage. (*b*) The meaning of the word is much controverted. On the one hand it is supposed that having cleared away the rubbish and *débris* the leaders of the people came upon the old foundations or 'base' of the former altar and erected the new altar upon the spot. But the translation 'upon its base' scarcely admits of such latitude of interpretation; although the sentiment is most suitable.

On the other hand, if to 'set upon its base' merely means to erect, the term is unnecessarily ponderous.

The translation of the R.V. margin 'in its place' seems to be the best. It is very probable that the word in the verse is identical with that in ii. 68. The altar was set up in the place which it was permanently to occupy.

for fear was *upon them because of the people of* those *countries*] R.V. **the countries.** The condensed language of this clause in the original has occasioned much perplexity. Literally it runs 'for in fear upon them because of &c.'. (i) Another rendering has been proposed 'for they (set up the altar) in fear, which came upon them because of the people of the countries', but this leaves the word 'for' unexplained and supposes a very awkward construction.

(ii) The translation of the A.V. and R.V. cuts the grammatical

countries: and they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the
4 LORD, *even* burnt offerings morning and evening. They
kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and

knot contained in the words 'in fear' by translating them as the subject. Accepting this translation 'for fear was upon them &c.', a further question is raised by the motive of their action. The following answers have been given: (*a*) they set up the altar hoping to obtain thereby assistance from God, for they were in a state of fear: (*b*) they set up the altar in haste, for they feared the neighbouring peoples lest their interference at the court of Cyrus should check the work at its outset.

(iii) Quite a different turn to the verse is given by another rendering (?that of Ewald). 'They set up the altar (and they were able to do so), for there was a fear felt toward them (the Jews) on the part of the people of the country'. This would be a fear such as we read of in Gen. xxxv. 5; Ex. xv. 16; Jos. ii. 11. It is to be noticed that in the last two passages the same rather unusual word for terror is used as we find in this verse.

(iv) Supposing that there has been a corruption of the text, it has been suggested that some important words have fallen out and that we should read 'And the people of the countries gathered themselves together against them, and they (the Jews) set up the altar in its place, for in a moment of terror at them did they set it up'. (Ryssel.)

(v) The suggestion is here made that a very slight alteration—the omission of one letter (the preposition='because of')—will supply a good sense and remove the grammatical difficulty, i.e. '*for the people of the countries were a terror to them*'. The accidental repetition of this one letter has probably given rise to the whole difficulty. The meaning of the verse then will be 'they set up the altar, for their neighbours were a source of terror to them,' and the erection of the altar gave them religious confidence, it constituted a national rallying point; it was a beginning, and the success of the first movement might be decisive.

the people of those *countries*] R.V. **the people of the countries.** It is to be regretted that the R.V. has not here rendered this phrase ('ammê ha-[a]râçoth) by 'the peoples of the lands' as in ix. 1, 2, 11. It here apparently means the inhabitants of the border countries. See note on vi. 21.

burnt offerings morning and evening] The daily sacrifice morning and evening as described in Ex. xxix. 38; Num. xxviii. 3—8. Cf. Neh. x. 38.

4—7. THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

4. *They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written*] The manner of keeping the feast of tabernacles is described in Lev. xxiii. 34—42; Deut. xvi. 13—15.

It was the autumn or vintage feast, the most joyous of all the great annual festivals. It commemorated the wanderings in the Desert. It would henceforth commemorate also the return from the Exile.

offered the daily burnt offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required; and after- 5
ward *offered* the continual burnt offering, both of the new moons, and of all the set feasts of the LORD that were

At this festival Solomon dedicated his Temple, 1 Kings viii. 65; and with this festival was connected the reading of the Law by Ezra under Nehemiah (Neh. viii. 14—16).

'As it is written', a shorter phrase for that which occurs in ver. 2. Cf. 2 Chron. xxx. 5, 18.

by number, according to the custom, R.V. **ordinance**] The words in the original are clearly a reference to the passage in Numb. xxix. where the sacrifices for the feast of tabernacles are detailed, i.e. 13 young bullocks &c. on the first day, 12 &c. on the second, 11 &c. on the third, and so on. It is to be regretted that the same English words 'according to their number, after the ordinance', which occur as a kind of refrain in that chapter (verses 18, 21, 24, 27, 30, 33, 37), were not either exactly reproduced here by the R.V., or altered there to 'by their number, according to ordinance'. The attention of the reader would then have been drawn to the echo given by this phrase to the phraseology of the Pentateuch.

(Yet another rendering of the same phrase appears 1 Chron. xxiii. 31 '*in* number according to ordinance'.)

as the duty of every day required] because the number of the sacrifices altered every day during the Feast of Tabernacles. Literally, 'the thing of the day in its day': the same phrase is rendered 'every day a portion', 2 Kings xxv. 30; Jer. lii. 34: 'as every day's work required', 1 Chron. xvi. 37.

5. *and afterward* offered] R.V. '*and afterward*', the verb being supplied from the previous verse.

The clause implies that after the celebration of this Feast of Tabernacles the Jews resumed for the first time since the destruction of Jerusalem the regular sacrificial system.

the continual burnt offering] i.e. the daily morning and evening sacrifice, prescribed in Ex. xxix. 38—42.

both of the new moons, and of all the set feasts &c.] R.V. '**and** the offerings **of the new moons, and of all the set feasts**' &c. The A.V. gives the wrong impression that 'the continual burnt offering' belonged to 'the new moons, set feasts,' &c. The R.V. gives the right meaning.

The verse states that the Jews, now that the altar had been set up and the new order of things initiated by the solemn celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, resumed the customary burnt offerings, (1) daily, morning and evening, (2) at the new moon, (3) on all 'set feasts', (4) on the occasion of freewill offerings.

'*the new moons*'. A popular day of religious observance among the Israelites (cf. 2 Kings iv. 23; Hos. ii. 11; Amos viii. 5): not included among 'the set feasts' described in Lev. xxiii., where the first day of the seventh month is the only new-moon day spoken of as a

consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a free-
6 will offering unto the LORD. From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt offerings unto the LORD. But the foundation of the temple of the LORD was
7 not *yet* laid. They gave money also unto the masons, and to the carpenters; and meat, and drink, and oil, unto them

'holy convocation' (ver. 24). Perhaps because the observance of 'the new moons' had been adopted from the general religious customs of the Semitic races, it received no special prominence in the Levitical code. The sacrifices for the 'new moons' are described in Num. xxviii. 11—15.

the set feasts]—see Levit. xxiii. 2—37, 'The set feasts of the Lord, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations' (R.V.),—i.e. (1) the Sabbath (ver. 3), (2) the Passover (ver. 5), (3) the Feast of Weeks (15—21), (4) the Feast of Trumpets (ver. 24), (5) the Day of Atonement (27—32), (6) the Feast of Tabernacles (34—36). In 2 Chron. viii. 13, 'the set feasts' are the three great annual festivals, 'unleavened bread', 'weeks', 'tabernacles', and these are probably intended here.

The 'new moons' and the 'set feasts' are found along with 'the Sabbaths' in 1 Chron. xxiii. 31; 2 Chron. ii. 4, viii. 13, xxxi. 3; Neh. x. 33.

a freewill offering] Freewill offerings were made (1) on the great feast-days, see Deut. xvi. 10, 16, 17; and (2) whensoever any individual Israelite or Gentile desired (Num. xxix. 39). They are called 'oblations' (Corbans) in Lev. i. ii. iii., where they are defined in detail.

6. *From the first day of the seventh month* &c.] This statement taken in conjunction with verse 5 ('and afterward' &c.) can only mean, that the Jews began to offer burnt offerings on their altar on 'the *first* day of the month', when the altar was set up, but that the regular offering of the daily sacrifice was not begun till after the Feast of Tabernacles (15th to 22nd).

But the foundation &c.] R.V. '*but*' &c.: no full-stop. The explanatory clause is added. The burnt offerings were regularly made on the altar, although there was no Temple building, nor Temple worship. Such a thing would have been almost incredible to the Jew of later centuries.

7. FIRST STEPS TAKEN TOWARDS THE REBUILDING OF THE TEMPLE.

the masons] The stone for the Temple was excavated from the hill on which Jerusalem stood.

It is possible that the word rendered 'masons' may include the rougher workmen for both stone and wood, i.e. quarrymen and wood-cutters, while the word rendered 'carpenters' may mean the skilled artificers for working up the wood and stone.

meat] The old English expression for 'something to eat'. Cf. Luke xxiv. 41, 'Have ye here any meat?' (R.V. 'anything to eat?').

of Zidon, and to them of Tyre, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa, according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia.

oil] One of the necessities of life for the inhabitants of a hot country, applied externally: classed here with meat and drink, and apparently also in Ps. xxiii. 5, civ. 15; Mic. vi. 15.

Solomon hired workmen from Tyre and Sidon and paid them in the same way, when the first Temple was erected. It is noteworthy that whereas 1 Kings v. 11 states that Solomon gave Hiram's household wheat and oil, we are told in 2 Chron. ii. 10 that he promised to give Hiram's servants 'wheat and barley and wine and oil'. On this occasion similar payment in kind was given—a heavy tax upon the resources of the young community—to the Zidonians and Tyrians, engaged in felling trees on Lebanon and floating them to Joppa.

from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa] R.V. **from Lebanon to the sea, unto Joppa.** The mountain of Lebanon from which cedars were obtained and sent into every country far and near (e.g. 2 Sam. v. 11, vii. 2; 1 Kings v. 6; 1 Chron. xiv. 1, &c.). Cf. Jer. xxii. 23, 'O inhabitant of Lebanon that makest thy nest in the cedars'.

The Tyrian workmen conveyed the trunks of cedar-trees from the hills to the nearest coast and then floated them in enormous rafts as far as Joppa, the nearest seaport to Jerusalem. Compare 2 Chron. ii. 16, 'And we will cut wood out of Lebanon, as much as thou shalt need: and we will bring it to thee in floats by sea to Joppa (marg. Heb. Japho); and thou shalt carry it to Jerusalem.'

'To the sea of Joppa', the A.V. rendering, preferred by some, is most unnatural.

Joppa—the modern Jaffa—was included in the tribe of Dan (Josh. xix. 46), but was never taken from the Philistines. Famous from the story of Jonah. In the Græco-Syrian period largely occupied by Jews, and included within Jewish territory by Jonathan and Simon, the brothers of Judas the Maccabee (see 1 Macc. x. 75). Peter at Joppa restored Tabitha (Acts ix. 36—43), and was summoned thence by Cornelius (Acts x. 5). Now a small seaport, but of considerable importance. With certain improvements to the harbour it would become an important place. Distance 30 miles from Jerusalem.

according to the grant that they had &c.] The 'grant' or permit seems to be the probable rendering of the Hebrew word, which does not occur elsewhere in the Old Testament.

of Cyrus king of Persia] What is the grant referred to? It appears from Herodotus (iii. 34; see Rawlinson's note on *Herod.* iii. 19) that Cyrus was not master of Phœnicia, and was not therefore in a position to give a grant to the Jews to obtain cedar from Lebanon. Nor is it probable that the 'grant' means royal permission to enter into treaty with the Tyrians and Zidonians.

We must understand the word quite generally. The action of the Jews in procuring wood and stone and hiring workmen was in accordance with the wish of Cyrus, under whose favour they had undertaken the task of rebuilding the Temple.

8 Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the remnant of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all they that were come out of the captivity *unto* Jerusalem; and appointed the Levites from twenty years old and upward, to set forward the work of the house

8—13. The Foundation of the Temple.

8. The Second Year of the Return.

of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem] cf. ii. 68. Where the old Temple had been and the new was to be.

began] The meaning of this verb standing by itself, without an object and without a verb depending upon it, is not at first sight obvious. There are two ways of explaining it. (1)='they made a beginning and appointed'—referring to the work generally; the verb 'began' being used without an object expressed. (2)='began to appoint'—the two words 'began' and 'appointed' being, by a common Hebrew usage, placed coordinately. Of these two the former is the preferable. 'Began to appoint' gives a feeble sense. 'Began and appointed', i.e. 'began by appointing' expresses the full meaning.

Zerubbabel &c., *and the remnant* &c.] R.V. ...**and the rest** &c. We find mentioned here (*a*) the two leaders, Zerubbabel the head of the royal, Jeshua the head of the priestly house, (*b*) the priests and Levites, (*c*) the rest of the returned community.

Zerubbabel here has the place of honour (see ver. 2) in connexion with the building of the Temple, the commission which he had received from Cyrus. The prominence of the Levites in comparison with the smallness of their numbers (cf. ii. 40—42) deserves attention. 'Their brethren the priests and Levites'. (Cf. ver. 2, Jeshua—his brethren the priests.)

appointed the Levites] The word 'appointed', lit. 'to cause to stand', is one very common in our author. Used of a building 'to set up', ii. 68, iii. 3, ix. 9; Neh. iii. 1, 3, 6, 13, vi. i, vii. 1; of persons 'to appoint', 'set over', ver. 9, Neh. iv. 13, vi. 7; 1 Chron. vi. 31, xv. 17.

from twenty years old and upward] The limits of age for the Levite laid down in Num. viii. 24, 25 excluded from service those younger than 25 and older than 50. The religious reorganization under David required the services of the Levite 'from twenty years old and upward'; so 1 Chron. xxiii. 24 and 27. The small number of Levites available made it all the more important to lower the standard of age. (For modification of original legislation see also on vi. 20.)

to set forward the work] R.V. '**to have the oversight of**', (Marg.) '*set forward*'. A rare word used in Ezra and 1 Chron. xxiii. 4. Elsewhere it occurs only as a participle in titles to Psalms and in Habak. iii. 19 'for the Chief Musician.'

The Latin version 'ut urgerent opus' has suggested the rendering of the A.V. But the sense, suggested by the participial title 'the Chief

of the LORD. Then stood Jeshua *with* his sons and his 9
brethren, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, to-

Musician, Conductor or Director', is that of superintendence and direction. The R.V. construes 'to have the oversight of' here, and 'to oversee' in 1 Chron. xxiii. 4, the word being in both places used of the Levites appointed to superintend the work to be done in the 'House of the Lord'.

9. This verse presents considerable difficulty: (*a*) The English reader cannot fail to be struck with the awkwardness of the final clause, 'the sons of Henadad...the Levites'. (*b*) The names here mentioned have been understood by different commentators to represent four, two and three families.

(*a*) The manifest dislocation of the verse has caused some to conjecture that it is a gloss, which has found its way into the text, having been originally introduced to supplement the previous verse by the names of those who had been appointed to the work and by emphasizing the fact that they undertook the duty. This conjecture, which is not without probability, would assign a very early date to the gloss, since the verse appears in the LXX. and, though in a corrupt form, in 1 Esdr. v. 58, 'Then stood up Jesus, and his sons and brethren, and Cadmiel his brother and the sons of Madiabun, with the sons of Joda the son of Eliadun, with their sons and brethren, all Levites, with one accord, setters forward of the business, labouring to advance the works in the house of God' (A.V.).

If we dismiss this conjecture on the ground of its lack of external evidence, we must be prepared to treat the verse as having come down to us in some way corrupted or mutilated.

The key to the verse lies in the last words, 'the Levites'. The verse describes who the Levites were that received the commission (described in verse 8), and how they discharged it. The student therefore will take care not to confound the Jeshua here mentioned with the Jeshua (the high-priest) mentioned in the previous verse. This Jeshua is the Levite whose name occurs in chap. ii. 40.

The natural arrangement of the words (illustrated by 1 Esdr. v. 58 quoted above) would be, 'Then stood Jeshua with his sons and his brethren, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah, (*and*) the sons of Henadad with their sons and their brethren (i.e. *all*) the Levites together, to have the oversight of the workmen in the house of God.' The verse thus specifies the Levites who undertook the oversight of the workmen.

(*b*) The names of the Levitical families who returned appear in chap. ii. 40, where there is some uncertainty whether the expression 'of the children of Hodaviah' refers to Kadmiel alone or to 'the children of Jeshua and Kadmiel' taken together.

The 'Judah' of our verse is probably a misreading for Hodaviah, not, as some prefer, an alternative name of the same person.

(1) Some see in the verse a mention of *four* Levitical families, i.e. those of Jeshua, Kadmiel, Judah, and Henadad.

(2) Others think that only *two* are intended, i.e. those of Jeshua and

gether, to set forward the workmen in the house of God: the sons of Henadad, *with* their sons and their brethren the
10 Levites. And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, they set the priests in their apparel

Kadmiel, who are further defined as sons of Hodaviah (=Judah), and as sons of Henadad.

(3) It seems better to suppose that there are *three* families referred to: (i) 'Jeshua with his sons and his brethren', apparently a complete family, (ii) 'Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Hodaviah', apparently a special branch of the family of Kadmiel, (iii) 'And the sons of Henadad, with their sons and their brethren', who, though not mentioned in ii. 40, are represented in Nehemiah's time (Neh. iii. 18, 24, x. 9).

The absence of Henadad's name from the list in chap. ii. 40 is strange. But we must account for it by supposing either that the Henadad family never left Palestine, or that they came to Jerusalem between the arrival of Zerubbabel and the beginning of the second year, or that they belonged to the class more numerous than scholars have hitherto taken account of, i.e. those who returned to Jerusalem from exile in other countries. Perhaps the family of Henadad ('the grace or favour of Hadad', cf. Hadad, Benhadad, Hadadrimmon) had Syrian connexions or had found refuge in Syria during the disasters of Israel and Judah. Compare vi. 21, 'all such as had separated themselves from the filthiness of the heathen of the land'.

10. *And when the builders* &c.] By 'the builders' is clearly meant the workmen, not, as some commentators, Zerubbabel and Jeshua.

they set the priests &c.] So also R.V. text. (1) According to this reading, (*a*) the subject of the verb must be the leaders of the people (as described in verse 2); (*b*) the word 'set' in the Hebrew is the same as 'appointed' in ver. 8 (see note); (*c*) and a parallelism may be noted between verses 8, 9 and 10, 11. Verses 8 and 10 describe the *appointment* (8) of the Levites, (10) of the priests; verses 9 and 11 the *work* (9) of the Levites, (11) of the priests.

But the parallelism in other respects breaks down. In verse 8, the subject of the first clause ('Zerubbabel &c. began') is also the subject of the second ('and they appointed'). In verse 10 the subject of the first clause cannot (except by the very unlikely interpretation which identifies 'the builders' with Zerubbabel and Jeshua) be taken as the subject of the second. Again in verse 8, after the word 'appointed' we find the sign of the accusative before 'the Levites' (so also in 1 Chron. xv. 17, 18). In ver. 10 its absence is very noteworthy, when taken in conjunction with the evidence for the other reading.

(2) According to some MSS. and ancient versions **the priests stood**, R.V. margin. This reading is supported by *thirteen* Hebrew MSS. (according to Kennicott and de Rossi), by the LXX. (ἔστησαν), by the Vulgate (steterunt), and by the parallel version in 1 Esdr. v. 59 ('and the priests stood' &c.). It is more likely to have been the original reading, and to have been altered by the insertion of a single small letter (yôdh) so as to correspond with the form which appears in ver. 8, 'appointed'.

with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the LORD, after the ordinance of David king of Israel. And they sung together by course in 11

Supposing the received text to be the original, we have to account for (α) the omission of this letter in the authorities quoted above, (β) the absence of the sign of the accusative, (γ) the statement that Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the priests appointed the priests.

Adopting the intransitive 'stood', (α) we are able to account for the common text by the supposition that it is a reproduction of the form used a few lines above; (β) the construction is perfectly simple, cf. 2 Chron. xxix. 26, xxxv. 10; (γ) though the parallelism of verses is lost, the order of the sentences is less artificial; with the introduction of the foundation of the Temple a fresh subject is started; (δ) in the ceremonies of the Temple the priests would be independent, 'they stood': the expression 'they caused to stand or set', though suitable as applied to 'the Levites', the subordinate order (ver. 8), is less suitable as applied to 'the priests'.

in their apparel] literally 'arrayed' or 'vestured', i.e. in their priestly garments, cf. ii. 69. In the similar description given in 2 Chron. v. 12 the same word receives closer definition 'arrayed in white linen' or 'byssus'.

with trumpets] as in 1 Chron. xv. 24, xvi. 6; 2 Chron. v. 12. The priests were specially commissioned to blow the sacred trumpets. Num. x. 8.

with cymbals] David assigned the instrumental music to the Levites, the cymbals especially to the sons of Asaph. Compare 1 Chron. xxv. 1 with 1 Chron. xvi. 4, 5, xxv. 6.

after the ordinance of David king of Israel] R.V. **after the order of** &c. The same phrase occurs in 1 Chron. xxv. 2, 'after the order of the king', (R.V. marg. Heb. '*by the hands of the king*').

11. *And they sung together by course*] R.V. **And they sang one to another**, literally 'and they answered', the same word as is rendered 'answered' in x. 12; Neh. viii. 6. The traditional interpretation of this expression has seen in it an allusion to antiphonal singing, whereby a Psalm such as Ps. cxxxvi. would be rendered by two choirs, one choir singing the clause 'O give thanks unto the Lord for He is good', the other replying 'for His mercy endureth for ever' &c. There can be no doubt that certain Psalms, such as xxiv. 7—10, cvi. cvii. cxviii. cxxxvi., lent themselves very readily to such musical rendering; and it is possible that Nehemiah's division of the people into two companies on a great festal occasion may favour the view that antistrophic chanting was then in vogue (Neh. xii. 31 &c.). But, in our ignorance of early Jewish music, it is impossible to speak with certainty upon the subject, while it is very easy to import modern and Western notions into our conceptions of Oriental music. The present verb very probably means that the chant of praise was responded to with a great burst of chorus, vocal and instrumental, the substance of which was some well-known sacred refrain. Cf. Ex. xv. 20, 21.

praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because *he is* good, for his mercy *endureth* for ever towards Israel. And all the people shouted *with* a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of
12 the LORD was laid. But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, *who were* ancient men that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many

because he is *good, for his mercy* endureth *for ever*] R.V. 'saying, **For he is good, for his mercy** &c.' The clause *quotes* the refrain. It has been natural perhaps to suppose that the allusion is made to Ps. cxxxvi. But reference to other passages, where the same refrain is quoted (1 Chron. xvi. 41; 2 Chron. v. 13, vii. 3, xx. 21; Jer. xxxiii. 11) shows that the words are not a quotation from a Psalm, but rather a liturgical response in frequent use at sacred festivals, upon which the well-known Psalm was founded. The present verse constitutes an interesting fulfilment to the prediction of Jeremiah (xxxiii. 10, 11).

because the foundation...was laid] The word here used occurs in 2 Chron. iii. 3, where the student will find the rendering of the R.V. (not of the A.V.) illustrated by this verse.

12. *But many* &c. *and chief of the fathers*, who were *ancient men, that*] R.V. **But many** &c. **and heads of fathers' houses, the old men who,** i.e. the heads of the people who would be most conspicuous, priests, Levites, and heads of families. The Vulgate 'et seniores' has apparently introduced a fourth official class, 'the Elders'. The elders are not mentioned here; but see chap. v. 5.

had seen the first house] Solomon's Temple was destroyed in 587. The foundation of the new Temple was laid in 536. There were even some alive sixteen years later (520) to whose recollection of the former building the prophet Haggai could appeal (Hag. ii. 3).

when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes] The traditional interpretation preserved in the Hebrew accents connects this clause with the one preceding, '*the first house* standing on *its foundation, when this house was before their eyes*' (so marg. R.V.) The objection to this rendering is the concrete use of the word rendered 'foundation' not found elsewhere. But the construction is more vigorous and more vivid than that of the A.V. preferred by most commentators, which connects the whole clause with the words following.

wept with a loud voice] Clearly not tears of joy; expressions of joy are noticed in the next clause: nor tears of grief, because they could never live to see the completion of the building, or because the character of the work was by comparison with the former Temple poor and insignificant. Only the foundations were being laid, and the general plan was on a larger scale than that of Solomon's Temple (see on vi. 3). Disappointment at the small scale of the beginning may have taken possession of some (cf. Hag. ii. 3—9; Zech. iv. 10). But the thoughts of the disasters of their youth, the sorrows of their manhood in exile,

shouted aloud for joy: so that the people could not discern 13
the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping
of the people: for the people shouted *with* a loud shout,
and the noise was heard afar off.

Now *when* the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin 4
heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple
unto the LORD God of Israel; then they came to Zerub- 2
babel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them,
Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye *do;*

the gaps in their numbers, the insignificance of the new community by comparison with the splendour of Messianic hopes (Is. lx.), were enough to cause sadness and weeping.

shouted aloud for joy] the younger and middle-aged men. If memory was sad, hope was joyful.

13. *So that the people could not discern*] literally, 'And the people &c.' The people generally, not merely the leaders, were of two minds. The sounds were mingled together; the weeping near at hand was as loud as the shouting. And the confused sound was audible a long way off.

CH. IV. THE RECORD OF OPPOSITION. (I.) VV. **1—5**, FROM THE REIGN OF CYRUS TO THE REIGN OF DARIUS. (II.) VER. **6**, DURING THE REIGN OF XERXES. (III.) VV. **7—23**, DURING THE REIGN OF ARTAXERXES.

1. *Now* when *the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin*] Here called 'adversaries' by anticipation. From the Compiler's point of view, the Samaritans were never anything but foes of the Jews.

The word 'adversaries' is applied to them again Neh. iv. 11.

Judah and Benjamin] as in chap. i. 5. The great majority of those who returned, exclusive of priests and Levites, belonged to these two tribes. In view of the use of the expression chap. 1. 5, there is no necessity to see here (as some commentators have done,) an allusion to the old hostility between the Northern and Southern Tribes.

the children of the captivity] i.e. the 'b'nê hag-gôlah'. The phrase occurs also in vi. 16, 19, 20; viii. 35; x. 7, 16. On 'the Captivity' see note on i. 11. The meaning is the same as 'the children of the province' ii. 1. 'The children of the captivity' recalls their past calamities; 'the children of the province', their new position of subjection in the old homes.

unto the LORD God of Israel] R.V. **unto the LORD, the God of Israel** cf. i. 3.

2. *then they came* &c.] R.V. **then they drew near to Zerubbabel, and to the heads of fathers' houses.**

for we seek your God, as ye do] The claim to cooperate in the work of building the Temple is based upon the assertion of common worship. The phrase 'to seek' in the sense of 'to worship' is not uncommon

and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esar-haddon
3 king of Assur, which brought us up hither. But Zerub-

in these books and in Chronicles. Cf. vi. 21; 1 Chron. xxii. 19; 2 Chron. xv. 13, xvii. 4, xxxi. 21, xxxiv. 3.

and we do sacrifice unto him] so R.V. text. R.V. margin. 'Another reading is, *yet we do no sacrifice since &c.*' The Hebrew words for "unto him" and "not" though written with a different second letter are pronounced in the same way, 'lô'. The context as a rule makes it easy to distinguish the meaning. But there are some *fifteen* instances, in which the Hebrew Bibles preserve the tradition of confusion between the two words. It is even possible that the word 'lô' ('unto him') may have sometimes been written with the same second letter as the negative (e.g. Ex. xxi. 8; 1 Sam. ii. 3; 2 Sam. xvi. 18; 2 Kings viii. 10).

In this verse the Hebrew text has the letters of the negative; the margin has the letters of the pronoun.

The *external* evidence is in favour of the pronoun 'unto him', being supported by the K'ri, by the LXX. (αὐτῷ), the Vulgate ('nos immolabimus victimas' without a negative), the Syriac, Versions and by the parallel text in 1 Esdr. v. 69 ('and do sacrifice unto him').

Internal evidence may thus be summarized. In favour of *the negative* ('yet we do no sacrifice'), it may be alleged

(1) that the statement contained in the alternative reading 'we do sacrifice unto him' would have no weight, since the Jews would at once reject as idolatrous sacrifices not offered at Jerusalem:

(2) that the Samaritan argument requires the negative. Having pleaded sameness of worship, they regret the omission of sacrifice and proceed to entreat that they may obtain this privilege by becoming sharers in the work.

In favour of *the pronoun* ('unto him') it may be replied

(1) that had the disputed word been the negative, it would stand in the Hebrew in the wrong place, i.e. before the pronoun 'we' instead of before the verb 'sacrifice':

(2) that the affirmative clause ('and we do sacrifice unto him') expands the force of the plea for common worship. That they had not sacrificed at Jerusalem hitherto, was, they could plead, either due to ignorance or a fault which they now wished to rectify:

(3) that the argument is strengthened by the assertion of long-established custom of sacrifice:

(4) that the pronoun 'unto him' was very liable to be altered to the negative by patriotic scribes who could not tolerate or credit the statement that their hated enemies had at such an early time done sacrifice to the God of Israel.

We conclude that the balance of probability preponderates for the reading 'and we do sacrifice unto him'.

since the days of Esar-haddon king of Assur] R.V. **Assyria.** Esar-haddon succeeded Sennacherib (cf. 2 Kings xix. 37; Is. xxxvii. 38) and reigned over Assyria 12 years, 680—668.

His name in the Assyrian Inscriptions appears as 'Assur-ak-iddin' or 'Assur sent a brother'. The Greek attempts to transliterate the

babel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, You have nothing to do with us to build a house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the LORD God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us. Then the people of 4

name are very strange: the LXX. gives 'Asbakappas', 1 Esdr. v. 69 'Azbazareth'.

In the A.V. '*Assur*' occurs also in Ps. lxxxiii. 8, *Asshur* in Num. xxiv. 22, 24; Ezek. xxvii. 23, xxxii. 22; Hos. xiv. 3. The difference in the spelling is purely arbitrary. The R.V. has altered 'Assur' to 'Assyria', but has left 'Asshur' in the above passages. This is to be regretted, since there is no difference in the original to justify the preservation of 'Asshur' by the side of 'Assyria' (see Gen. ii. 14; Ezek. xxiii. 7; Hos. vii. 11; viii. 9; ix. 3; x. 6; xi. 11).

3. *But Zerubbabel* &c....*the chief of the fathers*] R.V. ..... **heads of fathers' houses.** Zerubbabel's name stands first, as in iii. 8, in connexion with the work, with which he had been commissioned by Cyrus.

You have nothing to do with us] literally 'It is not for you and for us'. A common Hebrew idiom, cf. Judg. xi. 12, 'What hast thou to do with me?' literally 'What is there for thee and for me &c.?' 2 Kings iii. 13; for its occurrence in the N. T., cf. Mark i. 24; John ii. 4. The A.V. of 1 Esdr. v. 70 gives 'It is not for us and you to build together'.

unto our God] Almost as if they had said 'our God and not yours'.

ourselves together] The union of the new community and the exclusion of all strangers. The word rendered 'together' is not to be understood as if the phrase were an exclusive one, 'ourselves alone'. It emphasizes the *combined* action of the true Israelites. Cf. Ps. ii. 2 'take counsel together'.

unto the LORD God of Israel] R.V. '**unto the LORD, the God of Israel**', cf. ver. 4, i. 3. This implies, though it does not assert in so many words, that the applicants were not members of Israel.

as king Cyrus &c.] referring to the words in i. 3 'Who is there among you of all his people? his God be with him &c.'

The refusal of the application is thus technically based upon the wording of Cyrus' decree; the applicants failed to come under the permission which Cyrus had granted, and could not therefore take part in the work. Zerubbabel and his companions evaded the dilemma of having to meet the religious plea either by counter-argument or by direct contradiction. At the same time they made it quite evident that they declined to recognize the identity of worship which was pleaded, or the claim to relationship and political union which underlay the plea.

On the two points (*a*) who made the overtures? (*b*) how we are to regard their rejection by the Jewish leaders, see Introduction, § 6, Outline of History.

4. *Then the people of the land*] i.e. the Samaritans, as opposed to 'the people of Judah'. It is noteworthy that this expression 'the people of the land' ('am haâreç) became a synonym for 'the ignorant' or

the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and
5 troubled them in building, and hired counsellers against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

'the vulgar' in contrast to 'the wise', with special reference to a knowledge of 'the law'. Cf. John vii. 49 'This people who knoweth not the law are cursed'. Buxtorf gives illustrations by the Jewish proverbs 'Better is the bastard who is the disciple of the wise than the high-priest of the people of the land' (i.e. who is 'vulgar'). 'The people of the land (i.e. the 'vulgar') have degrees of morals but none of intelligence'.

weakened the hands] The Hebrew construction gives the idea of a continuous policy of weakening, terrifying, and bribing. For the phrase itself compare Jer. xxxviii. 4.

the people of Judah] 'The children of the captivity' are here given the name of the old southern kingdom. Cf. ver. 12.

troubled] so R.V.: marg. Or '*terrified*'. There are two readings. The reading of the Hebrew text or K'thib gives a word that does not occur elsewhere in the O.T. but is connected with a substantive rendered 'terror' (R.V. Isai. xvii. 14). The reading of the Hebrew tradition or K'ri, preserved with the text, gives an otherwise unused form of a common word meaning 'to trouble'. In all probability the letters of the unused root were transposed by a scribe so as to give the familiar root; preference should be given to the harder rendering, 'terrified them from building'.

5. This verse describes one effectual method of opposition, 'hired counsellors against them'. This will not necessarily imply that bribes were given to the king's ministers referred to elsewhere (vii. 28, viii. 25) as 'his counsellors'. We should in that case have had the word more definitely expressed as '*the* counsellors' or 'the king's counsellors'.

It rather means that 'the people of the land' paid officials (probably connected with the satrapy of Syria) to make unfavourable reports at the king's Court respecting 'the people of Judah'.

hired] Cf. the application of Samaritan money *within* the Jewish community, Neh. vi. 12, 13. The word used with special reference to Balaam in Deut. xxiii. 4; Neh. xiii. 2.

to frustrate their purpose] i.e. to render fruitless their cherished scheme of rebuilding the Temple. 'Frustrate'='break', ix. 14. 'Purpose'='counsel' x. 3, 8; Neh. iv. 15. The two words occur together Ps. xxxiii. 10 'The LORD bringeth the counsel of the nations to nought'.

all the days of Cyrus, &c.] Cyrus died in 529.

even until the reign of Darius king of Persia] Cyrus was succeeded by Cambyses, who died in 522. Pseudo-Smerdis then reigned for 7 months, and was succeeded by Darius Hystaspes 522. (Upon the disputed question of chronology raised in this verse, see the note on verse 7.) Darius, Darayavus, 'the Preserver' (Herod. vi. 98 translates ἐρξείης) gave order and system to the Persian Empire, of which he was the second founder. Darius consolidated the successes of Cyrus. Like

And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his 6
reign, wrote they *unto him* an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. And in the days of 7
Artaxerxes wrote Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest

Augustus following upon Julius Cæsar, he gave, as a statesman, system and cohesion to the Empire, which he had inherited from his predecessor's military genius.

6. *Ahasuerus*] R.V. margin 'Or *Xerxes*. Heb. Ahashverosh'. The well-known Xerxes, the son of Darius, who reigned 20 years (485—465). He is generally identified with the Ahasuerus of the book 'Esther'.

in the beginning of his reign] i.e. on the death of Darius, who had favoured the Jews.

unto him] R.V. omits these words, which are not found in the Hebrew.

an accusation] Heb. 'sitnah', which occurs elsewhere only in Gen. xxvi. 21 as the name of a well called 'sitnah' or 'enmity' by Isaac on account of the opposition of the Philistines. Akin to the name 'Satan', opposer. The LXX. misunderstanding the original renders by ἐπιστολή.

the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem] Another designation, cf. ver. 1 'Judah and Benjamin', ver. 4 'the people of Judah'.

7. *And in the days of Artaxerxes*] Artaxerxes Longimanus succeeded his father Xerxes and reigned forty years (465—425). He is mentioned in Ezra vii. 1; Neh. ii. 1.

The name in the inscriptions appears as Artakshathra, compounded of 'Arta' meaning 'great' (cf. Arta-phernes, Arta-bazus) and 'Khsathra' 'kingdom'.

The view which identifies this Artaxerxes with Pseudo-Smerdis or Gomates, the usurper of the Persian crown on the death of Cambyses, is discussed in the Note on the whole section appended to verse 23.

wrote Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their companions] It has been very commonly supposed that this verse introduces the letter which is so fully described in verses 8—10, and is therefore to be explained in close connexion with verse 8. According to this view 'Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel and the rest of their companions' are the Samaritans who originate the accusation of the Jews before Artaxerxes, while Rehum, Shimshai &c. (vv. 8, 9) are assumed to be the Persian officials of the Province, induced by the bribes or misrepresentations of the Samaritan community to forward to the king in writing their formal complaint against the Jews. Furthermore, as the letter is said to have been written in Aramaic, and we pass immediately from Hebrew into Aramaic, this in itself would be a reason for supposing that verses 8 &c. described more fully in detail the writing mentioned in verse 7. But (*a*) this theory fails to account for the abruptness of style and the want of connexion between verses 7 and 8, which is evident even in the English version; (*b*) the bare statement of ver. 7 that Bishlam and his companions 'wrote to Artaxerxes', and of ver. 8 that Rehum and Shimshai also wrote to Artaxerxes, can only by a process of imagination be

of their companions, unto Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the writing of the letter *was* written in the Syrian tongue, and interpreted in the Syrian tongue.

transformed into private Samaritan information imparted to the Persian officials and then lodged by them before the king in the shape of a departmental complaint; (*c*) the theory does not explain why the Hebrew is not resumed after the conclusion of the letters (verses 17 and 21). The version preserved in 1 Esd. ii. 16 cuts the knot by freely fusing the two verses together 'But in the time of Artaxerxes king of the Persians, Belemus, and Mithridates, and Tabellius, and Rathumus, and Beeltethumus, and Semellius the secretary, with others that were in commission with them, dwelling in Samaria and other places, wrote unto him against them that dwelt in Judea and Jerusalem these letters following'.

It seems preferable to ascribe the disjointed character of these verses 6, 7, 8 to the roughness of the Compiler's work, and to suppose that each of these three verses presents us with a separate instance of Samaritan opposition in which the Samaritans 'wrote' an indictment against the Jews. Having mentioned what took place in the reign of Xerxes (ver. 6), the Compiler goes on to state that there were two such written accusations in the days of Artaxerxes. The first he says was written by Bishlam &c., the second by Rehum &c. In his mention of the first letter, he either condenses the full document into a brief notice or was only able to discover a short statement in the public chronicles. In his mention of the second, he is able to lay the document before his readers, obtaining it from an Aramaic chronicle, from which he makes a long extract and introduces it without further preface.

This explanation accounts for (*a*) the abrupt transition from ver. 7 to ver. 8, (*b*) the mention in both verses of a letter written to Artaxerxes, (*c*) the continuance of the Aramaic language in the narrative, e.g. v. 17, 23, vi. 18.

Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel] Names of foreign colonists, 'Bishlam' the LXX. renders 'in peace' (ἐν εἰρήνη) as if not a proper name. On 'Mithredath' see note chap. i. 8. 'Tabeel' perhaps a Syrian name; cf. the name Tabeal (Isai. vii. 6), or a Persian (cf. Tabalus, Herod. I. 153).

the letter] The Hebrew has here (cf. ver. 18, 23) made use of a Persian word, which completely mystified the Versions. The LXX. renders it 'the tax-collector' (ὁ φορολόγος), the Vulgate 'accusationis'. It is pronounced 'nisht'ewân' and is compared with a modern Persian 'nuwischten' to write. Perhaps the word occurred in the records from which the Compiler obtained his information as to the letter.

was *written in the Syrian tongue, and interpreted in the Syrian tongue*] R.V. 'was written in the Syrian character, and set forth in the Syrian tongue', margin 'Or *Aramaic*' for 'Syrian'. This is all we hear about the letter. What occasioned its composition and how it was received we do not know.

We gather from this verse that in the days of Artaxerxes the official

Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe wrote 8
a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this
sort: then *wrote* Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the 9

correspondence of the Syrian province or satrapy was conducted in Aramaic. This indeed, had been the language of diplomatic communication in the days of the Assyrian monarchy (2 Kings xviii. 26; Is. xxxvi. 11). As the language of diplomacy and commerce among the races of Western Asia, it held its own with Greek and was only finally displaced in a much later time by the diffusion of Arabic, which followed upon the successes of the Mahommedans (see Introduction on 'the Aramaic language'). The strange thing is that its use should have been made the subject of special remark in this verse. But probably the point to which attention is drawn, is the fact of the letter being written in Aramaic characters as well as expressed in the Aramaic tongue. The early Aramaic Alphabet probably differed considerably from the early Hebrew. The mention of the Aramaic characters is perhaps adduced as a proof that the Compiler had either seen the actual letter or obtained the account from a source which mentioned this point particularly. The verse shows conclusively that Aramaic was not yet the language of the Jewish people.

8. At this verse begins the first long section (iv. 8—vi. 18) written in the Aramaic language (see Introd.), which the Compiler has probably extracted bodily from Aramaic records.

Verse 8 introduces briefly the description of the letter of accusation against the Jews sent by Rehum and Shimshai.

Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe] Rehum was probably the chief official of the Samaritan community. The name is considered by some to be of Persian origin, and a contraction of some longer Persian name, e.g. Rheomithres, which is found in Arrian. It appears also in Jewish lists (see Ezr. ii. 2; Neh. iii. 17, x. 25), but that need not exclude its foreign origin.

the chancellor] Literally 'the lord of judgement'. Sayce suggests 'lord of official intelligence', the Aramaic word for 'judgement' being practically identical with the Assyrian word 'dhem', used of the official reports sent to the king by provincial rulers. Here the title apparently belongs to the chief officer of the district.

In the LXX., Syr. and Vulg. the title not being understood appears as a proper name; 1 Esdr. ii. 16 makes the same error 'Rathumus and Beeltethmus'.

Shimshai] Perhaps the same name as the Persian 'Sisamnes'.

the scribe] i.e. the governor's secretary. Each governor of a Persian province was attended by this official (Herod. III. 128), who acted as a check upon the governor as well as for administrative purposes.

9. *then* wrote &c.] Although ver. 8 ends with 'in this sort', the actual copy of the letter is not given until ver. 11. Verses 9—10 describe more minutely the senders, whose names were perhaps attached to the letter.

Nine of the nationalities from which the Samaritan colonists had

scribe, and the rest of their companions; the Dinaites, the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Susanchites, the Dehavites,
10 *and* the Elamites, and the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Asnappar brought over, and set in the

been drawn are here mentioned by name; and the existence of many other varieties is implied in verse 10.

Scholars have been able approximately to identify the names.

the Dinaites] are probably the 'Dayani', a tribe mentioned in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pilesar and other Assyrian kings as inhabiting Western Armenia. If this identification be correct, it illustrates the very different sources from which Samaria had been colonised.

the Apharsathchites] These have not yet been recognized with any certainty in the inscriptions. Rawlinson identifies with the Apharsachites (v. 6, vi. 6) and considers the 'Apharsites', the second name below, to be an accidental repetition of the same word. He understands 'the Persians' to be meant in each case. Other scholars deny that any Assyrian king was ever in a position to have obtained colonists from Persia. Frid. Delitzsch suggests the inhabitants of one of the two great Median towns 'Partakka' and 'Partukka' mentioned in Esarhaddon's inscriptions.

the Tarpelites] Rawlinson identifies with 'Tuplai', which name appears in the Inscriptions as equivalent to the Greek *τιβαρηνοί*, a tribe on the coast of Pontus.

Tripolis in Northern Phoenicia is suggested by another scholar (Hitzig).

the Apharsites] See above. Identified probably with a Median tribe mentioned in the inscriptions of Sennacherib as dwellers in the district of Parsua.

the Archevites] The dwellers in Warka, a town S.E. of Babylon, the same as Erech (Gen. x. 10).

the Babylonians] i.e. dwellers in Babylon,—in Esarhaddon's days the capital of the subject province of Babylonia, Nineveh being the capital of the Empire. Possibly inhabitants expelled for insurrection.

the Susanchites] The dwellers in Susa, one of the capitals of the Persian Empire, mentioned in Neh. i. 1, Dan. viii. 2, and Esther, the chief town of Elam.

the Dehavites] Rawlinson identifies with the Dai (? Daghestan), a Persian tribe mentioned by Herodotus (i. 125); Frid. Delitzsch, with the dwellers in the town called 'Du-ua' mentioned in an Assyrian inscription (747 B.C.).

the Elamites] dwellers in Elam, 'the Highlands' or Elymais, the country lying E. of Babylonia, having Persia on its eastern, Media on its northern frontier.

10. *and the rest of the nations*] Implying that the number was not nearly exhausted by these *nine* names.

whom the great and noble Asnappar] R.V. **Osnappar**. This name is nowhere else mentioned in the O.T. Who this Osnappar was, has

cities of Samaria, and the rest *that are on this* side the river, and at such a time. This *is* the copy of the letter 11
that they sent unto him, *even* unto Artaxerxes the king:

been much disputed. Some have identified him with Esarhaddon, conjecturing that this was either another name or an honorific title. Others have supposed him to be a general commanding Esarhaddon's armies. But the name nowhere occurs in the Inscriptions as a second name or as a title of Esarhaddon, even if it were probable that having been called Esarhaddon in ver. 2 he should here be called by a different name or title without any explanatory word. No general appears of this name. And the manner of the allusion presupposes his royal dignity. Moreover, neither Esarhaddon nor any general of his invaded Elam.

Scholars now begin to accept the ingenious and most probable suggestion that 'Osnappar' is the Aramaic attempt to reproduce the name of Assur-bani-pal, the great Assyrian king. He was the only Assyrian king who captured Susa and could carry off 'Susanchites'; no king so fully deserved the titles of 'great and noble'; this name ('Assur the father of the son') by a strong contraction of the middle word, is not so far removed from the sound of 'Osnappar', especially if the final 'l' of 'pal' is changed to 'r' (cf. 'Pôrus' for 'Pul', or 'Babiru' for 'Babilu'), and the 'r' of 'Assur' is weakened to 'n' (cf. Nebuchad*r*ezzar and Nebuchad*n*ezzar) = Assun...par.

Assur-bani-pal reigned 42 years (668—626). The records of his brilliant and successful reign have recently been deciphered (G. Smith's *Assurbanipal*, p. 187). His arms were everywhere victorious. The severest contest in which he was engaged was with his own brother Sassumukem, governor of Babylon, who rebelled against him. The rebel's death and the capture of Babylon (646) ended the struggle. But this fact in conjunction with his great conquest of Elam explains the joint mention of Babylonians, Susanchites and Elamites among the colonists, whom he transplanted into Samaritan territory.

It appears then that Assur-bani-pal by introducing his colonists into Samaria was the author of the fourth colonization. It would be wasted labour to try to identify the nationalities of ver. 9 with the names recorded in 2 Kings xvii. 24 in connexion with a different colonization.

in the cities of Samaria] R.V. '*in the* city *of Samaria*'.—The word in the Aramaic is singular, cf. ver. 17. The other cities are covered by the next phrase.

and the rest that are on this *side the river*] R.V. **and in the rest** of the country **beyond the river**. In these words two things deserve to be noted. (1) The words 'beyond the river' clearly indicate the country W. of the Euphrates. The names of the nationalities who send the letter are presented in the light in which they would appear to the receiver, i.e. the king, at Susa to the E. of the Euphrates. The phrase 'The country beyond the river' (the Abhar-Nahara) was a recognised geographical name for the Syrian satrapy. (2) The wideness of the expression 'in the rest of the country' may be compared with the

Thy servants the men *on this* side the river, and at
12 such a time. Be it known unto the king, that the Jews
which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem,
building the rebellious and the bad city, and have set up
13 the walls *thereof*, and joined the foundations. Be it known

version given in 1 Esdr. ii. 17 where 'the Dinaites, &c.' are compressed into 'the judges that are in Cœlesyria and Phœnice'. The word 'judges' is a mistranslation. But the mention of Cœlesyria and Phœnicia corresponds with the indefinite language used in this verse. It is not impossible that the letter of accusation against the Jews may have been the joint production of many communities throughout the satrapy of Syria, who felt themselves aggrieved at privileges accorded to the Jews, or imperilled by the revival of their strength.

and at such a time] R.V. **and so forth.** The A.V. regarded this word as a brief way of expressing the date of the letter. The LXX. omitted it. The Vulgate rendered it as a salutation 'in pace'.—It signifies the suppression of matter that is unimportant='et cætera'.

11. *unto him, even unto Artaxerxes*] R.V. **unto Artaxerxes the king.**

the men on this *side the river*] R.V. **beyond the river.** The A.V. does not recognize that the senders of the letter place themselves in the position of the recipient; the expression "beyond the river" applied to a country would to a Persian subject convey as distinct an idea of a particular district as 'Cisalpine and Transalpine Gaul' would to a Roman subject whether living in Italy or Gaul.

and at such a time] R.V. '**and so forth**', i.e. 'et cætera'. See note on ver. 10. Probably a long and wearisome salutation is thus briefly dispatched.

12. *the Jews*] We have here practically the first application of this name to the new community at Jerusalem. It had been used of the Southern Kingdom (2 Kings xvi. 6, xxv. 25; 2 Chron. xxxii. 18) and of its exiles (Jer. xxxii. 12, xxxiv. 9, xxxviii. 19, xl. 11, 12, 15, xli. 3, xliv. 1, lii. 28, 30; Dan. iii. 8, 12). As the return from the Captivity almost exclusively affected the exiles of the Southern Kingdom, the name was naturally applied to the new dwellers in Jerusalem and the neighbourhood, and was quickly adopted as the designation of all members of the race; cf. Zech. viii. 23; Ezra iv. 23, v. 1, 5, vi. 7, 8, 14; ten times in Nehemiah, fifty-one times in Esther. The History of Israel had become the History of the Jews.

which came up from thee to us are come] R. V. **which came up from thee are come to us,** generally expressed; i.e. from exile on the banks of the Euphrates to dwell in Judæa and Jerusalem. The introductory statement of the subject.

building] R.V. **they are building.** A separate clause, containing an epitome of the charge against the Jews. 'The rebellious and the bad city', cf. ver. 15. An appeal to its antecedents was calculated to prejudice the king against Jerusalem.

and have set up the walls] R. V. **finished:** the verb in the original has the idea of completion.

now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls set up *again*, *then* will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and *so* thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings. Now because we have maintenance from *the* 14

and joined the foundations] R.V. **repaired,** which gives the sense of the word better, and is more intelligible than the A. V.

The accusation that the Jews were engaged in rebuilding the city, strengthening and repairing the walls, seems to refer to the days of Artaxerxes and to the work either of Nehemiah or, as is more probable, of Ezra before Nehemiah's arrival. Those who see Pseudo-Smerdis in Artaxerxes (vv. 7, 11) maintain that the accusation is designedly false, and intended to incense the Government against the Jews for exceeding the instructions of Cyrus's decree, which limited them to the restoration of the Temple.

13. *set up* again] R.V. **finished.**

then *will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom*] R. V. **they will not pay tribute, custom, or toll.** Cf. ver. 20, vii. 24. The R.V. gives the right order according to the Aramaic. The first word denotes the contribution of provinces, and the imperial taxation levied on districts; the second word probably the duties on merchandise or on the produce of the land for maintenance of provincial rule; the third, tolls levied upon travellers, for maintenance of roads and communication.

and so *thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings*] R.V. **and in the end it will endamage the kings.** The A.V. is certainly wrong in translating by the second person singular. The verb refers to the city of 'Jerusalem', which would become the author of mischief.

The word rendered by the A.V. 'the revenue of' and by the R.V. 'in the end', has caused much perplexity. Neither 1 Esd. ii. 18 nor the versions LXX., Vulg. and Syr. have attempted to translate it.

In most Hebrew Bibles it is read 'Aphtôm'. It has been conjectured to be a word of Persian origin (cf. old Persian 'Apatama', 'most remote': the Pehlevi 'af-dom'='end'), and to be used here as an adverb 'in the end', 'eventually'.

Some of the best Hebrew texts however now read 'Aphtôs' (?='revenue').

The rendering 'revenue was a mere conjecture of the mediæval Hebrew commentators based upon the context, and by some scholars is still preferred.

This expression of loyal interest in the welfare of the king's treasure was a somewhat transparent method of conciliating the royal favour to their side.

14. *have maintenance from* the king's *palace*] R.V. **eat the salt of the palace;** which preserves the metaphor of the original. The LXX. omitted the clause: Vulg. 'memores salis, quod in palatio comedimus': 1 Esdr. ii. 20, 'forasmuch as the things pertaining to the Temple are now on hand', which substitutes a different sentence for one that was not intelligible. The old Jewish translation 'because we aforetime destroyed the Temple', adopted by many former com-

king's palace, and *it was* not meet for us to see the king's dishonour, therefore have we sent and certified the king;
15 that search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers: so shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city *is* a rebellious city, and hurtful unto

mentators (cf. Luther, 'Nun wir alle dabei sind, die wir den Tempel zerstöret haben'), seems to have been based upon the old symbolical custom of 'sowing with salt' the site of a town or place that had been destroyed, e.g. Judg. ix. 45, and upon the idea of unfruitfulness associated with salt (cf. 'a salt land and not inhabited', Jer. xvii. 6; Deut. xxix. 23; Zeph. ii. 9; cf. Heb. Job xxxix. 6; Ps. cvii. 34). Others, with the same conception, 'we have salted (Jerusalem) with the salt of the palace', i.e. assisted the Imperial armies in its destruction. 'The palace' in the original is the same word ('heycâl') as that used for 'the temple' in iii. 6, v. 14. The ambiguity of this word and the use of a rare metaphor has given rise to the difficulty of translation. Literally, the words mean 'because we have salted the palace's salt'. The explanation then will be not, as has been suggested, 'because we have been entertained (guest friends, i.e. are the king's friends), at the palace', but 'because we are in the king's service'. The writers as representatives of colonies and dependent districts were very probably officials, and therefore members of the great network of Persian government.

The English word 'salary' from salarium or salt-money is generally compared with this phrase.

and it was *not meet*] R.V. **and it is not meet.**

dishonour] literally 'nakedness'. A strong metaphor, which the LXX. ἀσχημοσύνη reproduces. Cf. Lev. xviii. 7, &c. The order is emphatic, 'and the shame of the king it is not meet for us to see'. The Vulg. 'læsiones' gives the technical Latin word for 'damage' in a general sense.

15. *that search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers*] Literally, that one may search, i.e. the officials in whose keeping the records were. Perhaps the plural should be read, as in ver. 19.

For this appeal to 'the book of records', compare chap. vi. 1, 2, and the allusions in the book of Esther to the existence of such an official register recording facts and events of State importance, Esth. ii. 23, vi. 1, x. 2. Rawlinson refers to Diodorus Siculus (II. 32) who speaks of 'the royal parchments in which the Persians in accordance with some law preserved the record of the deeds of former time' (ἐκ τῶν βασιλικῶν διφθερῶν, ἐν αἷς οἱ Πέρσαι τὰς παλαιὰς πράξεις κατά τινα νόμον εἶχον συντεταγμένας).

thy fathers] This expression might be adduced to prove that the Artaxerxes addressed could not be Pseudo-Smerdis. But it would be unfair to lay stress upon it. The context shows that the king's predecessors in the rule of Western Asia are intended, Assyrian and Babylonian no less than Median and Persian.

hurtful] i.e. as a nucleus of revolt.

kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time: for which *cause* was this city destroyed. We certify the king that, if this city be builded 16
again, and the walls thereof set up, by this means thou shalt have no portion on *this* side the river.

Then sent the king an answer unto Rehum the chan- 17
cellor, and *to* Shimshai the scribe, and *to* the rest of their companions that dwell in Samaria, and *unto* the rest beyond the river:

kings and provinces] i.e. to subject kings as well as to the great king.

'Provinces' (cf. the use of the word, ii. 1) applied to the large districts into which the Empire was divided. See Dan. ii. 48, iii. 2; Esth. i. 22, iii. 8, &c.. They are described as 127 in number in Esther i. 1, viii. 9.

they have moved sedition within the same] i.e. the Jews within the city of Jerusalem; cf. 19.

...of old time: for which cause, &c.] An expression better suited to writers in the days of Artaxerxes than in the reign of Pseudo-Smerdis, only 65 years from the date of the destruction of Jerusalem (586 B.C.).

destroyed] R.V. **laid waste.**

16. *be builded* again, *and the walls thereof set up*] R.V. **be builded and the walls finished.**

by this means] i.e. in consequence of Jerusalem becoming once more a fortified city and so recovering her capacity for rebellion.

thou shalt have no portion on this *side the river*] R.V. **beyond the river.** For this expression see note on ver. 12.

no portion] For the use of this phrase cf. Josh. xxii. 25, 27, 2 Sam. xx. 1, John xiii. 8 (οὐκ ἔχεις μέρος), 2 Cor. vi. 15 (τίς μέρις πιστῷ μετὰ ἀπίστου). The letter concludes with an exaggerated appeal to the king's alarms.

(1) The Jews would be a centre of rebellion among the Western nations:

(2) A Jewish empire might spring from the fortifications of Jerusalem as an Israelite empire once before had done. In either case the Persian king would find himself deprived of his hold upon the country W. of the Euphrates.

The LXX. read οὐκ ἔστιν σοι εἰρήνη: i.e. thou shalt have no peace. 1 Esdr. ii. 24, 'thou shalt from henceforth have no passage into Cœle-Syria and Phœnice'. Both paraphrases of our text.

17. *an answer*] Another Persian word in the original, 'pithgama', used also in Esth. i. 20, a 'decree', and Eccles. viii. 11, 'sentence'. The LXX. omits. Vulg. 'verbum'. Here=a royal rescript.

Rehum &c.] see ver. 9.

that dwell in Samaria] A detail not mentioned with such directness in verse 10. A comparison with that verse shows that the city, not the district, is intended.

18 Peace, and at such a time. The letter which ye sent
19 unto us *hath been* plainly read before me. And I commanded, and search hath been made, and it is found that this city of old time *hath* made insurrection against kings, and *that* rebellion and sedition *have been* made therein.
20 There have been mighty kings also over Jerusalem, which have ruled over all *countries* beyond the river; and toll,
21 tribute, and custom, *was* paid unto them. Give ye now

unto *the rest beyond the river*] So margin of R.V.—R.V. text **in the rest of the country beyond the river.** See verse 10, where the application of the word 'rest' is clearly the same. There it follows after the verb 'set in' (lit. 'cause to dwell'), here after the verb 'dwell'. The district or territory, not the population, is referred to.

and at such a time] R.V. **and so forth.** Cf. ver. 11.

18. *The letter*] On the word used here see note on ver. 8.

hath been *plainly read before me*] So the R.V. The margin of the R.V. gives 'translated' as the alternative rendering for 'plainly', and this agrees with the general later usage of the word. The same word in Hebrew occurs in Neh. viii. 8, where the R.V. renders 'distinctly', and its margin, 'with an interpretation'.

'Plainly' (Vulg. manifeste) would imply that the allusions &c. of the Samaritan letter had been faithfully explained, not merely that the oral reading of the letter had been distinct.

There is not much to be said for the rendering 'translated'. A Persian king would be acquainted with the official dialect of his satrapies; a translation of an Aramaic letter would not be required.

before me] Very possibly the king himself could not read. But see ver. 23. The reading was performed by servants; cf. Esth. vi. 1.

This expression favours the view that the king is claiming to himself credit for having heard the letter and had it carefully explained to him.

19. *And I commanded*] R.V. **decreed.** A more authoritative word. Literally, 'and from me was a decree made'; and they searched, 'and found'.

of old time] Cf. ver. 15.

hath *made insurrection against kings*] By the insurrections against kings and the sedition and rebellion of Jerusalem here mentioned as being recorded in the chronicles of the state is probably meant the treacherous and unstable policy of Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah (see 2 Kings xxiv. 1, 10, 20). Of this the Babylonian records would preserve the testimony. It is less likely that the more ancient records of the Assyrian Empire containing the account of Hezekiah's revolt from Sennacherib would have been consulted.

20. *over all* countries] R.V. **the country.** Literally, 'over all beyond the river'. The words refer to the warning of the Samaritan letter (ver. 16) that the king might lose the W. bank of the Euphrates.

toll, tribute, and custom] R.V. **custom, tribute, and toll.** See note on ver. 13.

commandment to cause these men to cease, and *that* this city be not builded, until *another* commandment shall be given from me. Take heed now that ye fail not to do this: 22
why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings?

Now when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter *was* 23
read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their

'The mighty kings', here referred to, have been identified with Menahem (2 Kings xv. 16) and Josiah (2 Chron. xxxiv. 6, 7, xxxv. 18). It is, however, needless to restrict the allusion of the present verse to those whose names appear in the Inscriptions or are involved in the ascertained history of Assyria and Babylon. Israelite traditions, oral or written, would probably have been accessible to those whom the king appointed to search into the past history of the race. The tradition of the golden age of David's rule and Solomon's empire would be rehearsed with pride by the captive Jew. The remoteness of the period mattered little. It was the boast of this people that their kings had once ruled over all the country W. of the Euphrates. This information coupled with the names of, perhaps, one or two of the other great kings, such as Omri, Jeroboam II., Menahem, Uzziah, Jotham and Josiah would be pretext enough for speaking of 'the mighty kings'.

21. *Give ye now commandment*] R.V. **Make ye now a decree.** Cf. 19. The Samaritan officials clearly held some authority over the whole adjoining territory.

and that *this city be not builded*] See notes on vv. 12, 13. The king's alarm lest a strong city should be made of Jerusalem agrees rather with the time of Nehemiah than with that of Zerubbabel. The naval victories of the Greeks had rendered the Persian coast frontier peculiarly vulnerable.

until another *commandment shall be given from me*] R.V. **until a decree shall be made by me.** The A.V. by introducing the word 'another' produced a needless ambiguity. The original has 'the decree', i.e. the permission to build.

22. *Take heed now that ye fail not to do this*] R.V. **And take heed that ye be not slack herein.** The king does not anticipate their disobedience, but warns against remissness or dilatoriness on the part of officials. The decrees of the Government were apparently not always executed with promptness in Syria even in the days of Artaxerxes. This fault is said to be not wholly eradicated yet.

why should damage &c.] The king's fears had been excited by the possibility of political complications and the weakening of his Western frontier. These apprehensions are intelligible in the light of the events of the great Persian War during the reign of Xerxes. Otherwise they seem exaggerated and insincere, as if the Samaritan letter had been accompanied by some substantial arguments which had won the king's appreciation.

23. *Now*] R.V. **Then**, i.e. Thereupon.

read before] cf. 18.

companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the
24 Jews, and made them to cease by force and power. Then

they went up in haste] R.V. **they went in haste**.—Far from being slack in executing the king's decree: gratified malice made them prompt as well as desirous to stay the work.

made them to cease by force and power] Literally 'with an arm and with troops'. Vulg. 'in brachio et robore', cf. Ezek. xvii. 9, 'without great power' (lit. arm); Dan. xi. 15, 31 ('arms'=strength). The LXX. render 'with horses and force' (*ἐν ἵπποις καὶ δυνάμει*). The Samaritans stopped the Jews from building "by main force". If the Jews resisted, resistance was useless in the face of the royal decree.

Perhaps we may see in the reference to the ruinous condition of the walls and defences of Jerusalem, Neh. i. 3, the results of the forcible means taken by the Samaritans to cause the work to cease.

Note on vv. 7—23.

The names of the Persian kings which occur in this chapter occasion special difficulty. Upon their right identification necessarily depends our understanding of the whole passage.

(*a*) The Persian kings succeed one another in the following order: (1) Cyrus (died, 529); (2) Cambyses, 529—522; (3) Gomates or Pseudo-Smerdis, 522; (4) Darius Hystaspes, 522—485; (5) Xerxes, 485—465; (6) Artaxerxes I. Longimanus, 465—425; (7, 8) Xerxes II. and Sogdianus; (9) Darius II. Nothus, 424—395, &c.

(*b*) In chap. iv. 5 we learn that the work of building the Temple was frustrated by the Samaritans "all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.' Again in ver. 24 (the work) 'ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia'. The work therefore was frustrated more or less (v. 16) between the years 536—520.

(*c*) In ver. 6 is mentioned a letter of opposition to the Jews written 'in the reign of Ahasuerus'; in ver. 7 a letter to the same purport 'in the days of Artaxerxes'; in verses 7 and 9 another letter to Artaxerxes with Artaxerxes' reply.

(*d*) The name Ahasuerus (Heb. Akhashvêrosh) is admitted to be the same as Xerxes (Khshyarsha). It appears throughout the book Esther as well as in this verse (iv. 6). The name in Hebrew Artakhshasta (iv. 7, 8, vi. 14, vii. 1, 11, 21; Neh. ii. 1, v. 14, xiii. 6) is clearly the name Artaxerxes.

(*e*) The question then arises how the names Xerxes and Artaxerxes occur in this passage, on either side of which stands the mention of the work of the Temple being stopped until the reign of Darius king of Persia; for that this Darius is Darius Hystaspes (521—485) and not Darius Nothus (424) is shown by the whole context and by chap. v. 1—5.

Only two answers to this question need come under discussion here.

(i) According to one view, the chronological sequence of the chapter is maintained. Verse 5 is considered to be a brief compendium

of the Samaritan opposition, which is then described in greater detail (6—23). The names Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes are assigned to the two kings Cambyses and Pseudo-Smerdis, who reigned between Cyrus and Darius. The advantage of this theory is obvious. The narrative flows smoothly on. The events of verses 6—23 amplify the statement of verse 5, and belong to the short period 529—521.

The objections that are presented (*a*) by the interchange of the names, (*b*) by the mention, in the letter, of the building of the city walls (vv. 12, 16), rather than of the Temple, on which the Jews were at work (vv. 1, 4, 24), have been met in the following way. (*a*) It is said that the names Xerxes and Artaxerxes are appellatives, like Pharaoh and Cæsar, which could be applied to any Persian monarch, e.g. Cambyses is called Artaxerxes by Josephus (*Ant.* xi. 2. 1). Furthermore it is argued that the Pseudo-Smerdis appears in history under several different names. (*b*) It is supposed that the Samaritans would represent the Jewish undertaking in the most hostile light, as aggressive fortification rather than Temple building; and it must be remembered that the outer walls and outworks of the Temple were always the strongest fortifications in the city.

On the other hand it seems fatal to this view that even if Xerxes and Artaxerxes are dynastic titles and not strictly names, no well-attested evidence is forthcoming of their promiscuous application. Josephus' history of this period is notoriously imperfect and inaccurate, and he, it is to be noted, calls *Cambyses*, Artaxerxes, although the defenders of this view hold that Cambyses is called Xerxes and Pseudo-Smerdis Artaxerxes.—It is surely rather unfortunate, to say the least, that supposing the names to be interchangeable, the interchange is not found elsewhere, and cannot even be proved from Josephus, whose evidence is chiefly relied upon. But the fact is that neither the testimony of Josephus nor, we may add, of Jewish tradition can be relied on for this period of history. The Jewish tradition appended to Nehemiah in the Masoretic note gives 'the years from the 1st year of Cyrus king of the Persians to the 32nd year of Artaxerxes the king,' (i.e. from 538—433) as *fifty-one:* while Hebrew commentary gives the Persian kings as Darius the Mede (1 year), Cyrus his son (2 years), Ahasuerus (14 years), Cyrus his son called Artaxerxes (32 years). Nor is it more satisfactory to see how the Pseudo-Smerdis is identified with Artaxerxes. Gomates or the Pseudo-Smerdis, it is said, appears under very different names, e.g. Mardus in Aeschylus (*Pers.* 771), Smerdis in Herodotus, Speudadates in Ctesias, and hence, why not as Artaxerxes here? But the very fact that he is called by so many different names, and never once Artaxerxes, is not favourable to the identification. Again, the argument that Pseudo-Smerdis being a Magian would heartily oppose the building of the Temple is strangely at variance with the omission in the letters of any reference to the Temple. It is equally at variance with the other contention, that the Temple building is not referred to because the mention of fortified walls would be more likely to arouse the king's indignation than that of sacred buildings. If further proof were needed of the improbability that 'Artaxerxes' is Pseudo-Smerdis, it would seem to be supplied by a

recollection of the troubled time that followed upon the death of Cambyses. Pseudo-Smerdis' 7 months' reign was spent in the midst of suspicion, disquiet, and confusion. The hearing of petty complaints and the investigation of ancient chronicles is not what we should expect from a reign which had hardly ceased to be the work of usurpation when it had begun to close in ignominy. The Samaritans were not likely to imperil their cause by approaching, in a time of confusion, a sovereign of doubtful claims whose acts would inevitably be reversed by any successful rival.

But apart from the consideration of its details, the crowning condemnation of this view is to be found in its main hypothesis, that Xerxes and Artaxerxes do not here mean the kings generally known as Xerxes and Artaxerxes but two other kings, the mention of whose names would remove a difficulty from the passage.

(ii) The other view requires us to admit the presence of an interruption in the chronological sequence of the book. Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes are the Xerxes and Artaxerxes (Longimanus) familiar to us under those names. Verses 6—23 do not expand the substance of verse 5, but they continue the historical treatment of its subject. That subject is the opposition of the Samaritans; and it is shown how their opposition displayed itself in the reigns of Xerxes and Artaxerxes.

The introduction of the times of Xerxes and Artaxerxes into this chapter interrupts, we must admit, the thread of the narrative. The passage, *vv.* 8—23, is inserted by the Compiler at this point because he imagined it related to the building of the Temple. The names of the kings did not suggest to him his error. Whether this should be charged to mere inadvertency, or to ignorance of the Persian history, we cannot say.

The tone of the letters fully bears out this supposition. There is no allusion to the Temple. The Temple had been erected many years ago. The complaint is made that the people are fortifying the city. Such a complaint, made to the Persian king after the war with Greece, with reference to a city only a day's march from the coast, had more significance than it could have had in the preceding century. It demanded serious consideration. The description in Neh. i. 3 of the condition of the city walls and gates seems to imply devastation more recent than that of the Babylonians 140 years previously. The violent measures of the Samaritans which 'by force and power' compelled the Jews to desist from their work may well account for this description. The intercession of Nehemiah procured the favour of 'the decree', which the king had declared to be necessary before any building was resumed (iv. 21).

Such an explanation fairly accounts for the presence of the names Xerxes and Artaxerxes. The internal evidence of the passage corresponds with it happily. The insertion of these 'anticipatory' fragments seems to us undoubtedly harsh. But it is very questionable whether in a work of such composite character it is not more natural to find occasionally an instance of harshness or inartistic arrangement due to compilation, than everywhere the smooth orderliness of the skilful modern historian.

ceased the work of the house of the God which *is* at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia. Then the prophets, Haggai the 5
prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto

24. This verse resumes the thread of the narrative, which was dropped at the close of verse 5. It must be admitted that the words 'then ceased' refer most naturally to ver. 23. The Compiler, who failed to observe that the preceding passage belonged to the generation of Ezra, and not to that of Zerubbabel, carries on the narrative in his own words.

so it ceased, &c.] R. V. **and it ceased.** The first clause expresses the fact of the cessation, the second its duration and continuance.

second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia] B.C. 521.

The Samaritans had succeeded only too well in checking the progress of the work. Cyrus occupied in schemes of conquest had little leisure to attend to such matters. The suspicious temperament of Cambyses inclined him to listen to sinister reports. The disturbed condition of the Empire during his reign and that of Gomates, his successor, gave abundant opportunity for petty tyranny and for the withdrawal of state privileges.

Chap. V. 1, 2. The Voice of the Prophets and the National Revival.

1. *Then the prophets*] R.V. **Now the prophets.** The beginning of a new paragraph, cf. i. 1, ii. 1, iii. 8, iv. 1.

Haggai the prophet] After 'the prophets', immediately preceding, this designation seems superfluous. But a comparison with chap. vi. 14, Haggai i. 1, shows that the phrase was commonly attached to Haggai's name. The short extant book of Haggai's prophecy combines reproof for the neglect with encouragement for the renewal of the work on the Temple. The book preserves prophecies uttered in the second year of Darius, (1) on the first day of the sixth month (i. 1), (2) on the twenty-first day of the seventh month (ii. 1), (3) on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month (ii. 10).

Zechariah the son of Iddo] cf. vi. 14. In Zechariah i. 1, 7 he is called 'Zechariah the son of Berechiah the son of Iddo the prophet'. An 'Iddo' is mentioned in Neh. xii. 4 among the heads of priestly families that returned with Zerubbabel and Jeshua: again in Neh. xii. 16 we find a Zechariah mentioned as the son of Iddo and the head of a priestly house, in the days of Nehemiah. Zechariah was probably the grandson of Iddo, and in the genealogies called in preference 'the son of Iddo' rather than 'the son of Berechiah', either on account of his father's early death, or because the name of 'Zechariah the son of Berechiah' would have been liable to confusion with 'Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah' (Isai. viii. 2). In the same way Laban is called the son of Nahor, not of Bethuel (cf. Gen. xxiv. 47, xxix. 5), Jehu the son of Nimshi, not of Jehoshaphat (1 Kings xix. 16; 2 Kings ix. 14, 20),

the Jews that *were* in Judah and Jerusalem in the name
2 of the God of Israel, *even* unto them. Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which *is* at Jerusalem: and with them *were* the prophets of God helping them.
3 And at the same time came to them Tatnai, governor

because the grandfather was the better known and the reputed founder of the house.

Zechariah must have been a very young man (cf. Zech. ii. 4) when he began to prophesy, if (which is hardly likely) he was still alive in the time of Nehemiah (445 B.C.). The date given to the first prophecy in his book is the eighth month of the second year of king Darius (Zech. i. 1).

Jews that were *in Judah and Jerusalem*] i.e. as distinguished from the Jews that were in the Captivity in Babylon.

in the name of the God of Israel, even *unto them*] R.V. **in the name of the God of Israel** prophesied they *unto them*. R.V. marg. *in the name of the God of Israel* which was *upon them*. The words 'unto' or 'upon them' close the verse strangely. The R.V. text expresses with greater distinctness the rendering of the A.V. 'unto them'. The rendering of the R.V. margin 'which was upon them' (i.e. the name of the God of Israel) although a harsh condensed expression, seems preferable. It is not at first sight evident who are intended by 'upon them'. Most commentators accepting this rendering explain the words as having reference to the two prophets, and illustrate them by Jer. xv. 16, 'Thy word was unto me a joy and the rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by Thy name, O Lord God of hosts.' This indeed is very possible. But the other explanation, which refers 'which was upon them' to 'the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem', seems most suited to the context. Not the ground of the personal courage of the two prophets, but the basis of their prophetic appeal, i.e. the spiritual calling of the nation, is the purport of the phrase. The prophets prophesied to the Jews in the name of the God Who had chosen them, Whose Name was called upon them. Cf. Isai. xliii. 5—7, lxiii. 19, lxv. 1; Jer. vii. 10, 14, 30; Dan. ix. 18, 19. The message of the prophets was to arouse the people from their neglect of the spiritual work which they were to perform—a work of which the Temple was a pledge,—the testimony to the nations that God had made Himself known unto Israel.

2. *Zerubbabel—Jeshua*] see notes on iii. 2, 8, iv. 3.

began to build] The building had been begun in the second year of Cyrus, 537—6 (chap. iii. 8, 10, v. 16). The work was now recommenced. The voice of the prophets supplied the needed encouragement. The effect of Haggai's witness is described in Hag. i. 12—14.

3—17. The Complaint against the Jews.

3. *And*] Omit R.V. Not in the original.

on *this* side the river, and Shethar-boznai, and their companions, and said thus unto them, Who hath commanded you to build this house, and to make up this wall? Then said we unto them after this manner, What are the 4

Tatnai, governor on this *side the river*] R.V. **Tattenai, the governor beyond the river.** Tattenai appears as Sisinnes in 1 Esdr. vi. 3, as Θανθεναι in the LXX. The name is not found except in this connexion. He was governor (probably satrap) of the whole district of Syria and Cilicia on the west of the Euphrates. There were twenty satrapies in the Persian kingdom (Herod. III. 89). Tattenai was therefore a man of the greatest eminence in Syria, next to the king himself. The expression 'governor beyond the river' is not due to the writer living on the eastern or Babylonian side of the river. It was the technical title of the governor of that satrapy. It appears on the coins of the Persian empire. Thus upon one coin appears the inscription "Maydi who is over the 'Abhar Nahara' (country beyond the River) and Cilicia".

Tattenai was the superior official, to whom Zerubbabel, the pekhah or governor of the small district of Jerusalem and its neighbourhood, would have to give account upon any report being made of treacherous action.

Shethar-boznai] R.V. **Shethar-bozenai.** 1 Esdr. vi. 3, 'Sathrabuzanes', LXX. Σαθαρβουζαναι, has been conjectured to be the Persian 'Chitrabarschana' (cf. a Persian name, 'Satibarzanes', in Arrian). His position is not described. Perhaps a 'secretary' to Tattenai, as Shimshai to Rehum (iv. 8).

Who hath commanded you] R.V. **gave you a decree.** The original requires the more weighty and official 'decree'. Cf. iv. 21, v. 13.

to build this house] referring to the Temple: the first subject of complaint: very different from the passage in iv. 8—23.

and to make up this wall] R.V. '**and to finish this wall**'. 1 Esdr. vi. 4, 'By whose appointment do ye build this house *and this roof, and perform all the other things?*'

We may assume that complaints from the Samaritans induced the satrap to inquire what authority the Jews had received to undertake the work. Seventeen or eighteen years had elapsed since Cyrus issued his decree. Two other kings had succeeded him. The third, Darius, was only just assuring his position upon the throne after two years of incessant warring. During this interval the affairs of a comparatively unimportant city in Syria may well have been almost forgotten.

4. *Then said we unto them*, &c.] R.V. **Then spake we unto them after this manner, What**, &c. Margin, 'Or, *Then spake we unto them after this manner. What*, said they, *are the names*', &c. 'Or, according to some ancient versions, *Then spake they unto them*, &c. See ver. 10.'

(*a*) The reading followed in the A. V. and R. V. is practically unintelligible. 'Then spake we' would naturally introduce the Jews' reply (the first person being remarkable, but quite intelligible): but the question, 'What are the names of the men that make this building?' is

5 names of the men that make this building? But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease, till the matter came to

as obviously the question of the governor. It is equally impossible to apply 'we' to the governor and his companions, and to see in 'Then spake we unto them', &c. a continuance of 'came Tattenai', &c. The only possible rendering is, 'Then spake we unto them after this manner (with reference to the question), What are', &c. But the ellipse is so harsh as to make this, even if it were grammatically possible, inadmissible.

(*b*) On the other hand, the alternative reading, given as the second alternative in the Margin of the R.V., supplies the sense needed by the context, i.e. 'They said'. This is supported by the LXX. (τότε ταῦτα εἶποσαν αὐτοῖς) and the Peshitto Syriac. It is also supported by internal evidence. In ver. 3, Tattenai and his friends ask the first question relating to official permission; in ver. 4 (according to the emended reading) they ask a further question, as to the names of the Jewish leaders. To neither question is the answer of the Jews directly recorded, since the substance of their answers is reported in the letter to Darius (11—16). That letter mentions also the interrogatories. The first interrogation is repeated verbatim (ver. 9). The second is described (ver. 10), '*We* asked *them* their names also', in a manner exactly corresponding to the present verse, Then spake *they* unto *them* after this manner, What are the names?

The emendation, it must be admitted, is the easier reading, and is therefore perhaps to be suspected as a correction. But it is impossible to accept the A.V. text as representing the original. It is best to receive the reading of the LXX. 'They said', and to regard the reading 'we said', as a very early error of a scribe who by a natural mistake began to write the 4th verse as the answer in a dialogue.

What are the names, &c.] Cf. ver. 10, 'the names of the men that were at the head of them'.

This enquiry would hardly have been made if the correspondence recorded in iv. 7—23 had taken place in the seven months' reign of Pseudo-Smerdis, and had brought official investigation so recently to bear upon the affairs of Jerusalem.

5. *But the eye of their God*] Cf. Deut. xi. 12, 'a land which God careth for; the eyes of the LORD thy God are always upon it'; Ps. xxxiii. 18, 'The eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him'; Ps. xxxiv. 15, 'The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous'.

upon the elders of the Jews] Cf. x. 8, 'the princes and elders'. The LXX. by a strange mistake render 'the captivity' (τὴν αἰχμαλωσίαν).

God's favour was shewn in that Tattenai did not immediately stop the work, but let it go on until he learned his master's wishes.

that they could not cause them to cease] R.V. **and they did not make them cease.** This gives the original accurately, and corrects the impression produced by the A.V.

till the matter came to Darius: and then they returned answer] R.V.

Darius: and then they returned answer by letter concerning this *matter*. The copy of the letter that Tatnai, 6
governor on *this* side the river, and Shethar-boznai, and his companions the Apharsachites, which *were* on *this* side the river, sent unto Darius the king: they sent a letter unto 7
him, wherein *was* written thus:

Unto Darius the king, all peace. Be it known unto the 8
king, that we went into the province of Judea, to the house of the great God, which *is* builded *with* great stones, and

till the matter should come to Darius, and then answer should be returned. Marg. Or, *they returned answer*. The R.V. corrects the grammatical mistake of the A.V. Both clauses are dependent upon the previous sentence. The governor and his party forebore to stay the work, until (1) the matter had been reported to Darius, (2) Darius's reply had been received by the governor. Then only would they, if it were necessary, interfere.

'*And then answer should be returned*' or, '*And then they returned answer by letter*'. In the former case the reference is to the answer of the king or of his officials to Tattenai: in the latter case, it is to the final reply of Tattenai, after hearing from the king, to the Jews. Perhaps the former is to be preferred on account of the formal 'by letter (nishtewan, cf. iv. 7) concerning it'.

concerning this matter] R.V. **concerning it.** The A.V. unnecessarily here repeats the word 'matter'. See ver. 17.

6. *Tatnai, the governor on* this *side the river*] R.V. **Tattenai, the governor beyond the river, and Shethar-bozenai.** See note on verse 3.

the Apharsachites, which were *on* this *side the river*] R.V. **the Apharsachites which were beyond the river.** Who the Apharsachites of the 'Abhar Nahara' were is not known. Possibly the same as the 'Apharsathcites' of chap. iv. 9 (where see note), represented officially by Shethar-bozenai, whose companions they are called.

7. *a letter*] In ver. 6 called in the Aramaic 'iggarta' (cf. ἀγγαρεύω), here 'pithgama' (cf. iv. 17), the more official designation.

all peace] Literally 'peace, the completeness or entirety'. The two words in apposition. 'Peace in every respect.'

8. *the province of Judea*] R.V. **the province of Judah.** On 'the province' see ii. 1. The A.V. gives the title 'Judea', which belongs to a later time, as the name of a country inhabited by the Jews. It occurs first in the Apocrypha (Tob. i. 18; 1 Macc. iii. 34; 2 Macc. 1, 10, &c.). 'Judah' occurs frequently in Ezra, e.g. iv. 6, v. 1. The LXX. gives εἰς τὴν Ἰουδαίαν χώραν: the Vulgate 'ad Judæam provinciam'.

to the house of the great God] The governor uses terms of great reverence towards the God of the Jews. In consequence some have called in question the genuineness of this letter. But there is in reality nothing unusual in the use of such expressions by Eastern potentates with reference to the gods of a conquered or subject country.

with *great stones*] Literally 'stones of rolling'. Stone, that is to say,

timber *is* laid in the walls, and this work goeth fast on, and
9 prospereth in their hands. Then asked we those elders, *and*
said unto them thus, Who commanded you to build this
10 house, and to make up these walls? We asked their names
also, to certify thee, that we might write the names of the
11 men that *were* the chief of them. And thus they returned us
answer, saying, We are the servants of the God of heaven
and earth, and build the house that was builded these many
years ago, which a great king of Israel builded and set up.

too large for ordinary transport and requiring to be moved on rollers. The immense size of the stones used in the construction of the temples in early days is an unending source of amazement, e.g. Baalbec.

The LXX. renders by 'chosen stones' 1 Esdr. vi. 9, by 'polished stones very precious': misunderstanding the original. Such adjectives applied to the foundations of the Temple were perhaps before the mind of the Apostle when he employs the metaphor of the building, cf. 1 Pet. ii. 4—7 (Isa. xxviii. 16). Vulg. 'lapide impolito'.

timber is *laid in the walls*] i.e. beams or joists for supporting floor or roof. Some suggest party-walls, for the division of chambers.

goeth fast on] R.V. **goeth on with diligence.** 'With diligence', a Persian word 'osparna' (used also vi. 8, 12, 13, vii. 17, 21, 26) which denotes care and attention as well as energy.

in their hands] referring to the Jews, implied in the words 'the province of Judah'.

9. *Who commanded..., and to make up*] R.V. **Who gave...a decree, ...and to finish.** Cf. on ver. 3.

these walls] R.V. '**this wall**' as in ver. 3.

10. *We asked their names*] R.V. **we asked them their names.** So the Aramaic. For the names of the Elders, cf. ii. 2.

the chief of them] R.V. **at the head of them.** Literally 'at or in the heads of them'. The R.V. renders as if the word was in the singular; cf. 2 Chron. xx. 27, 'Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them', (lit. at their head). But the rendering 'that were their heads' would be equally correct, and would account for the use of the plural.

11. *We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth*] The words of this profession are very emphatic in the original.

the God of heaven and earth] i.e. the God not of one kingdom only, but of the whole world, not of terrestrial supremacy alone, but of heavenly as well: see on chap. i. 2.

build the house that was builded &c.] i.e. we restore the house which having been built in remote times stood as the temple of our God for centuries.

a great king of Israel] i.e. Solomon. The expression here used shows that Tattenai like Artaxerxes (iv. 20), had heard the rumour either from the Jews themselves or from those acquainted with them, that there had

But after that our fathers had provoked the God of heaven 12
unto wrath, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar
the king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house,
and carried the people away into Babylon. But in the first 13
year of Cyrus the king of Babylon *the same* king Cyrus made
a decree to build this house of God. And the vessels also 14
of gold and silver of the house of God, which Nebuchadnez-
zar took out of the temple that *was* in Jerusalem, and brought
them into the temple of Babylon, those did Cyrus the king
take out of the temple of Babylon, and they *were* delivered
unto *one*, whose name *was* Sheshbazzar, whom he had made
governor; and said unto him, Take these vessels, go, carry 15
them into the temple that *is* in Jerusalem, and let the house
of God be builded in his place. Then came the same 16
Sheshbazzar, *and* laid the foundation of the house of God

been 'mighty kings over Jerusalem'. Solomon's temple was built 1014—1007, nearly 500 years before the reign of Darius.

and set up] R.V. **finished.**

12. *after that*] So R.V., R.V. marg. '*because that*'. The purpose of the passage is to account for the destruction of the Temple and the captivity of God's people. The conjunction is not temporal, but causal: 'for this reason, namely, that &c.' The rendering of the R.V. margin is preferable.

provoked...unto wrath] The word used here for 'provoke' is found in the Hebrew books with this meaning only in Job xii. 6. Elsewhere to 'shake', 'disquiet', 1 Sam. xxviii. 15; Isai. xiii. 13, xxiii. 11; Jer. l. 34.

the God of heaven] See on i. 2. A general description of Israel's provocation of their God is given in 2 Chron. xxxvi. 14—21.

Nebuchadnezzar] Cf. on i. 7: the Chaldean, i.e. the Babylonian.

13. *Cyrus the king of Babylon*] Cyrus so called frequently in the Inscriptions: cf. Artaxerxes king of Babylon, Neh. xiii. 6, and Darius king of Assyria, Ezra vi. 22.

the same *king Cyrus*] R.V. **Cyrus the king**: see on i. 1, 2.

14. *And the vessels also of gold and silver*] R.V. **And the gold and silver vessels.** See note on i. 7—11.

into the temple of Babylon] See note on i. 7, 'the house of his gods', i.e. the great temple at Babylon, which Nebuchadnezzar had restored.

Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor] Literally 'pekhah'. In i. 8, Sheshbazzar is called 'prince of Judah'. In Haggai i. 1 &c. Zerubbabel is called 'pekhah'. For the identification see note on i. 8.

16. *Then came the same Sheshbazzar*] The work here ascribed to Sheshbazzar is evidently that over which Zerubbabel presided in chap. iii.

the foundation] R.V. '**the foundations**'; so the Aramaic and iv. 12.

which *is* in Jerusalem: and since that time even until now
17 *hath it been* in building, and *yet it is* not finished. Now
therefore, if *it seem* good to the king, let there be search
made in the king's treasure house, which *is* there at Babylon,
whether it be *so*, that a decree *was* made of Cyrus the king
to build this house of God at Jerusalem, and let the king
send his pleasure to us concerning this *matter*.
6 Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was
made in the house of the rolls, where the treasures were laid

since that time &c.] A sentence showing that the cessation of the work mentioned in iv. 5, 24 must not be taken perfectly literally. Building was carried on from time to time, but no longer on any effective scale. The interval of time was from 536 to 520.

finished] R.V. **completed.** A different word in the original from that rendered 'finish' in verses 3, 9, 11, vi. 14.

17. *if* it seem *good to the king*] A similar phrase in vii. 18; Esth. i. 19.

in the king's treasure house] which apparently was the repository of important documents as well as of treasure. The expression occurs again in Esther iii. 9, iv. 7. The word rendered 'treasure' (ginzayya) is rendered by 'gaza' (γάζα) in the LXX. Compare Ezra i. 8; (gizbar) 'treasurer'; 1 Chron. xxviii. 11 (ganzak) 'treasure'; chap. vi. 1 gives the full explanation of the present phrase. The Vulgate too narrowly renders 'bibliotheca'.

at Babylon] i.e. where would be kept the records of the Babylonian Empire.

his pleasure] Same word as that in vii. 18, 'the *will* of God'. The LXX. by a mistake of similar letters renders 'having learnt' (γνοὺς).

concerning this matter] Same phrase as in verse 5 (where see note). The word 'matter' added here in the English for the sake of explicitness. Tattenai asks for instructions as to how he should proceed generally in dealing with the Jews and their Temple-building.

Chap. VI. 1—12. Darius's Decree.

1. *made a decree*] cf. iv. 19.

search was made] literally 'they made a search'. Plural used impersonally.

in the house of the rolls] R.V. **in the house of the archives:** marg. Aram. *books*.

rolls] The word usually rendered 'roll' is Megillah, see ver. 2; Jer. xxxvi. 2—6, &c.; Ezek. iii. 1, 2; Zech. v. 1. The word used here is 'Sêpher'='book'. Sometimes the two occur together 'the roll of a book' in Jer. xxxvi. 2, 4; Ezek. ii. 9. 'Sêpher' is the ordinary word for a book or a writing. The town Kirjath-Sêpher ('town of a book'), called also Debir, Jos. xv. 15, may have been famous for its treasured documents.

up in Babylon. And there was found at Achmetha, in the 2
palace that *is* in the province of the Medes, a roll, and
therein *was* a record thus written:

'The house of the Archives' at Babylon must have contained a state library in which such a document as Cyrus's decree would probably be found.

Such libraries containing documents consisting of burnt clay tablets have been found in Nineveh and in the vicinity of Babylon. The rolls and parchments and more perishable materials have not survived.

the treasures] cf. v. 17. It was evidently a place of great security.

2. *And there was found at Achmetha*] R.V. margin, That is, *Ecbatana*. The precious document was not found at Babylon. It has been suggested that valuable records were hastily transferred from Babylon to Ecbatana during the short and disturbed reign of Pseudo-Smerdis, who would wish to destroy the edicts of his predecessors. But whatever the cause may have been, notice of its removal had been duly recorded, and the enquiry at Babylon led to search and identification at Ecbatana.

Achmetha] This is the Aramaic transliteration of the Median capital known to us as 'Ecbatana' (Gr. ἐκβάτανα and ἀγβάτανα) of which the Persian pronunciation was something like 'Hangmatâna'. It was the summer residence of the Persian kings. According to Herodotus it was built by king Deioces (708—655 B.C.) and surrounded with seven walls. Alexander the Great resided there in the autumn of 324. After his death, the city fell into insignificance until under the Parthian monarchy it once more became a royal residence. Under the Mohammedans the name became altered to Hamadan. An unhistorical description of the place is given in Judith i. 1 ff.

in the palace] The royal palace, which was probably also the citadel (bîrah, Greek βάρις) and the treasury. The Aramaic word is the same as the Hebrew rendered 'palace' (marg. or 'castle') in Neh. i. 1; Esther i. 2 &c.; Dan. viii. 2 in reference to 'Shushan', and in 1 Chron. xxix. 1, 19 in reference to 'the Temple of Solomon'; 'castle', Neh. ii. 8, vii. 2 in reference to fortifications of Temple.

in the province of the Medes] R.V. **of Media.** Literally 'in the province of Madai' (see Gen. x. 2). Media stretched north and south between the Caspian sea and the country of Elam, being bounded by Mt Zagros on the W. and by Parthia on the E. During the earlier period, of which we have an historical account in the Inscriptions, Media seems to have been a tributary province of the Assyrian Empire. She shook off the yoke probably in the reign of Assurbanipal (666—624); and the Median king Cyaxares joined with the Babylonian king Nabopolassar in the overthrow of Nineveh. Cyrus by his defeat of Astyages (550 B.C.) gained possession of Media, which he united with the Persian kingdom.

was *a record thus written*] R.V. **was thus written for a record.** More literally accurate: the roll was to serve as the official memorandum.

3 In the first year of Cyrus the king *the same* Cyrus the king
made a decree *concerning* the house of God at Jerusalem,
Let the house be builded, the place where they offered
sacrifices, and *let* the foundations thereof *be* strongly laid;
the height thereof threescore cubits, *and* the breadth thereof
4 threescore cubits; *with* three rows of great stones, and a
row of new timber: and let the expences be given out of the

3. the same *Cyrus the king*] R.V. **Cyrus the king.** See v. 13.

made a decree concerning *the house of God at Jerusalem, Let &c.*] R.V. **made a decree; concerning** &c., **let** &c. The words 'concerning the house of God at Jerusalem' form a kind of heading to the memorandum, of which what follows is a transcript.

where they offered sacrifices] R.V. **where they offer sacrifices.**

and let *the foundations thereof* be *strongly laid*] The meaning of these words in the original is very uncertain They have been variously rendered, (1) 'and let them set up its foundations' (active), (2) 'And let its foundations be set up' (passive): but neither rendering gives any fresh idea to the preceding clause. (3) The rendering of the A.V. and R.V. 'let the foundations thereof be strongly laid' (whether passive, i.e. heavily weighted, or active, i.e. capable of bearing heavy weights), gives a fair sense, the emphasis resting upon the substantial character of the building. It may be doubted whether the text is correct. The transition from this clause to the description of the height and breadth of the building (the length being omitted) is abrupt and awkward.

The rendering of the versions shows the difficulty which the words occasioned and possibly the uncertainty of the text at a very early period. LXX. *καὶ ἔθηκαν ἔπαρμα.* Vulg. 'ponant fundamenta supportantia'. 1 Esd. vi. 24 'With continual fire' *διὰ πυρὸς ἐνδελεχοῦς.*

the height thereof, &c.] In view of the uncertainty of the text, it is doubtful whether we can rely upon these statements of dimensions, especially as the length is not specified. Solomon's temple is described in 1 Kings vi. 2 as 60 cubits long, 20 broad, and 30 high. Here the temple is to be 60 cubits high and 60 broad. Josephus who, speaking of Zerubbabel's temple, describes its height as 60 cubits less than that of Solomon's temple, is clearly comparing the passage in 2 Chron. iii. 4, where the porch of Solomon's temple is said to be 120 cubits in height, with the statement of our verse. If the dimensions here given are correct, the second temple in breadth and height was much larger than the first. The comparison in respect of size could hardly account for the disparaging criticism of certain Jews alluded to in Zech. iv. 10; Hagg. ii. 3. The view that the present verse does not give the actual dimensions but only the extreme limits to which the plan might be followed is too obviously an attempt to escape the difficulty to be at all a probable explanation.

4. *a row of new timber*] R.V. marg. 'According to the Sept. *one row of timber.*' It has been much disputed what 'the three rows of

king's house: and also let the golden and silver vessels of 5
the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of
the temple which *is* at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon,
be restored, and brought *again* unto the temple which *is* at
Jerusalem, *every one* to his place, and place *them* in the
house of God. Now *therefore*, Tatnai, governor beyond the 6
river, Shethar-boznai, and your companions the Apharsach-

great stones and the row of timber' can mean. (1) Some explain by three *storeys* of stones surmounted by one of wood, the elevation of the Temple. (2) Others by 'three *layers* of stone followed by one of wood', the material of the walls. (3) Others by 'three *courses* of stone backed by a wainscote of wood', the thickness of the walls. (4) But in all probability the verse should be explained by reference to 1 Kings vi. 36, where 'three rows of hewn stone and a row of cedar beams' are the construction of the walls of the inner court.

expences] R.V. **expenses.**

out of the king's house] i.e. from the royal revenue. To be defrayed probably from the purse of the 'Abhar Nahara' satrapy. This payment had obviously ceased, or its existence would have been known to Tattenai and the other officials. During the disturbances which took place at the close of Cyrus's reign, the officers of the provincial treasury probably found it convenient to stop this annual contribution. The voluntary subscriptions mentioned in ii. 68, 69 would therefore have been rendered necessary. Some have suspected that this part of the decree was never really carried out.

5. *and place* them *in the house of God*] R.V. **And thou shalt put them in the house of God.** The A.V. does not mark the abrupt transition to the 2nd pers. sing. The use of the 2nd pers. sing. and the occurrence of the same word 'put' as in the parallel context of v. 15 show that Sheshbazzar is here addressed. This name has not occurred before in this copy of Cyrus's decree. We must suppose that the copyist gives a free paraphrase of its contents.

the house of God] The Divine name is here used absolutely for the God of Israel.

6. The decree of Darius; the prohibition, no interference.

Tatnai...Shethar-boznai, &c.] R.V. **Tattenai...Shethar-bozenai.** See v. 3. Observe the sudden change into the direct address to the governor. Darius's decree is attached to the copy of Cyrus's decree, without any prefatory words to mark the transition or to call attention to Darius's action. The composition of the Compiler or of the document, which he cites, is rough and inartistic; but the meaning of the passage and its connexion with the context cannot be mistaken.

your companions] R.V. margin. Aram. *their*. This occurrence of the 3rd pers. pronoun in the original indicates perhaps that the writer transcribed the 3rd pers. pronoun, and omitted to alter it so as to suit his own version.

7 ites, which *are* beyond the river, be ye far from thence: let
the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the
Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in
8 his place. Moreover I make a decree what ye shall do to
the elders of these Jews for the building of this house of
God: that of the king's goods, *even* of the tribute beyond the
river, forthwith expences be given unto these men, that *they*
9 be not hindered. And that which *they* have need of, both
young bullocks, and rams, and lambs, for the burnt offerings
of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according

be ye far from thence] i.e. keep aloof from Jerusalem, and do not interfere with the work.

8. The injunction; official support, (*a*) money for the building.

I make a decree] cf. ver. 11, iv. 19, vii. 13.

of the king's goods, even *of the tribute beyond the river*] The king addressing the governor of the whole country W. of the Euphrates refers to that portion of the territorial tribute which the governor would remit to the king's treasury, the greater portion being reserved for his own use and for satrapial administration.

goods] So the LXX. 'possessions' (ἀπὸ ὑπαρχόντων): Vulgate 'treasury' (arcâ). The Aramaic word occurs again in vii. 26.

The royal contribution lays no burden upon the rest of the satrapy. It literally fulfilled the edict of Cyrus: it was 'given out of the king's house' (ver. 4) when it was paid out of the royal share in the tribute.

forthwith expences be given] R.V. **expenses be given with all diligence**, 'with all diligence' (A.V. 'forthwith'), see note on chap. v. 8. LXX. ἐπιμελῶς.

that they *be not hindered*] According to this translation, the words depend upon the previous clause. So also Vulg. 'ne impediatur opus'. The verb occurs in iv. 21, 23. Here the hindrance apprehended seems rather to be to the execution of the royal command than to the activity of the Jews. It is probable that we should rather render 'which is not to be neglected', a short abrupt clause denoting the urgency of the royal rescript, an instance of the idiom found also in Dan. vi. 15 'no decree...may be changed' (lit. a decree...not to change). The first part of the injunction relating to the payment will then conclude with a peremptory command for the order to be carried out, just as the second part relating to material for the sacrifices concludes with a demand for unremitting regularity in their supply (ver. 12).

9. (*b*) Material for the maintenance of the worship.

young bullocks, &c.] Cf. vii. 17.

for the burnt offerings of] R.V. **for burnt offerings to**. The king is speaking generally of burnt offerings as one chief class of offering, and not particularly of the Levitical system.

wheat, salt, wine, and oil] Cf. Ex. xxix. 40 (flour, oil, wine); Lev.

to the appointment of the priests which *are* at Jerusalem, let *it* be given them day by day without fail: that they may 10
offer sacrifices of sweet savours unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons. Also I 11
have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word, let

ii. 1—16 (flour, oil, salt, &c., the meal offering). The king alludes to the other chief class of offering.

according to the appointment] R.V. **according to the word**, i.e. the priests at Jerusalem were to specify what their system most required.

day by day] See on chap. iii. 4.

without fail] i.e. without intermission. Literally 'which is to be no intermission'. The LXX. must have had another reading in which the negative was dropped, and a similarly sounding word 'to ask' substituted for that rendered 'fail'. LXX. 'whatsoever they shall ask' (ὃ ἐὰν αἰτήσωσιν). The Vulg. 'lest there be room for complaint in aught' (ne sit in aliquo querimonia) and 1 Esdr. vi. 30 'without further question' seem also to have translated the more familiar root.

10. The king's special desire, propitiatory sacrifice and intercessory prayer to be offered on behalf of his dynasty.

sacrifices of sweet savours] R.V. **sacrifices of sweet savour.** One word in the original; it occurs also in Dan. ii. 46 'Then the king Nebuchadnezzar...worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him'. The expression recalls the 'burnt offering...of a sweet savour unto the Lord' (Ex. xxix. 18, 25; Lev. i. 9, 13, 17, ii. 2, 3, 9, 12) which should be compared with Gen. viii. 21. This interpretation lays stress upon the acceptableness of the propitiatory offering. Others giving the word a more material sense consider it to mean especially the incense used in offerings (LXX. εὐωδίας; Vulg. oblationes).

pray for the life, &c.] Compare especially Jer. xxix. 7 'and seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captive, and *pray unto* the Lord for it; for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.'

Allusions to sacrifice and prayer for Gentile rulers will be found also in Baruch i. 10—12, where ver. 11 especially should be compared with this passage 'And pray for the life of Nebuchodonosor king of Babylon, and for the life of Balthasar his son, that their days may be upon earth as the days of heaven'. See also 1 Macc. vii. 33, xii. 11; 2 Macc. iii. 35, xiii. 23.

and of his sons] i.e. for the prosperity of Darius's dynasty. We hear of two wives of Darius, Atossa, daughter of Cyrus, and Tarsys, daughter of Smerdis.

11. The penalty.

Also I have made a decree] The same words as in ver. 8, iv. 19.

whosoever shall alter] See especially Dan. vi. 15. The word 'alter' here probably includes infringement of the decree as well as alteration of its terms.

timber be pulled down from his house, and being set up, let him be hanged thereon; and let his house be made a dung-
12 hill for this. And the God that hath caused his name to dwell there destroy all kings and people, that shall put to their hand to alter *and* to destroy this house of God which *is* at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed.
13 Then Tatnai, governor on *this* side the river, Shethar-boznai, and their companions, according to that which

let timber be pulled down] R.V. **let a beam be pulled out**, more correctly. The beams of the man's own house should be the instruments of execution.

and being set up, let him be hanged thereon] R.V. **let him be lifted up and fastened thereon**. The subject of both words is the malefactor. The punishment here referred to is probably that of impalement, to which allusion is frequently made in Assyrian and Persian inscriptions. It may indeed be a form of crucifixion, such as is also implied in Gen. xl. 19 and Esth. ii. 23. The passages in Num. xxv. 4; Deut. xxi. 22, 23; Jos. viii. 29, where this frightful form of punishment is spoken of, seem to show that among the Israelites the victims were often first executed, and that the corpses were then hung upon a tree till nightfall. The Hebrew and Aramaic word for 'lift up' which is used in a perfectly general sense for elevation of any sort, e.g. Ps. cxlv. 14, cxlvi. 8, and Targum of Ps. xciii. 3, Jer. iii. 2, was applied technically to execution by impalement or crucifixion, as in the Targum of Esth. vii. 10. This double meaning of the word may illustrate the Saviour's word 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth' (Jo. xii. 32).

and let his house be made a dunghill for this] See 2 Kings x. 27; Dan. ii. 5, iii. 29. A repulsive metaphor for shameful overthrow, cf. 1 Kings xiv. 10; Job xx. 7; Zeph. i. 17.

12. *And the God that hath caused his name*, &c.] A Hebrew phrase (see Deut. xii. 11; 1 Kings viii. 29; Neh. i. 9; Jer. vii. 12) introduced by the Jewish Compiler into his paraphrase of Darius's decree.

destroy all kings and people] R.V. **overthrow all kings and peoples**. The word rendered 'destroy' here by the A.V. differs in the Aramaic from that rendered 'destroy' at the close of the verse. It is used in the Targum of 2 Kings ix. 33 for the words 'throw her down', of Ps. cxix. 139 'my zeal hath consumed me'.

that shall put to their hand] R.V. **put forth their hand.**

to alter and *to destroy this house*] R.V. **to alter** the same, **to destroy this house**; i.e. alter the decree and to destroy the Temple. These words illustrate the latitude that should be given to the expression 'alter'.

with speed] R.V. **with all diligence**, cf. ver. 8, and v. 8.

13—18. DARIUS'S DECREE EXECUTED: (*a*) THE TEMPLE COMPLETED, (14, 15), (*b*) DULY CONSECRATED AND DEDICATED (16—18).

13. *according to that which Darius the king had sent*] R.V. **because**

Darius the king had sent, so they did speedily. And the 14
elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the
prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of
Iddo. And they builded, and finished *it*, according to the
commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the
commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of
Persia. And this house was finished on the third day of the 15

that. R.V. marg. '*because of that which*'. The A.V. fails to give the meaning of the original. The rendering of the R.V. margin seems preferable. The *prompt* action of the governor was the result not so much of the king's sending (for in any case an answer to the governor's question was expected) as of the emphatic command contained in the royal letter. In the face of this explicit order, steps were at once taken.

so they did speedily] R.V. **did accordingly with all diligence.** See *vv.* 8, 12, v. 8. We have no reason to suppose that Tattenai himself was ill-disposed against the Jews. His letter to the king (v. 6, &c.) may have been due to Samaritan representations. But once acquainted with the facts and informed of the king's wishes, he had no ill-will against an insignificant Jewish settlement at Jerusalem.

14. *the elders of the Jews*] cf. v. 5.

and they prospered] R.V. **and prospered.** Cf. v. 8.

through the prophesying] i.e. the success of the work was due in great measure to the encouragement and support rendered by the two prophets. The LXX. and 1 Esd. render as if the meaning were 'in the time of the prophesying of Haggai and Zechariah.' The Vulgate gives 'in accordance with the prophesying' (juxta prophetiam).

Haggai...Zechariah] see on v. 1.

and according to the commandment of Cyrus, &c.] R.V. **the decree of Cyrus**, &c. The word in the original differs slightly from that in the previous clause. The R.V. preserves the distinction drawn between the Divine 'commandment' and the human 'decree'.

Cyrus...Darius...Artaxerxes] The decrees of Cyrus and Darius have been given by the author (chap. i. 2—4, vi. 3—12). The mention of a decree of Artaxerxes occasions a difficulty. (1) The decree of Artaxerxes quoted in iv. 18—22 is hostile to the Jews and could not be intended in this verse. (2) How does Artaxerxes' name occur in this passage, which is concerned with the reign of Darius? Certainly the context would lead us to expect the mention of only Cyrus and Darius. Some in consequence have supposed that the name of Artaxerxes has been inserted as a gloss, either in ignorance of the true chronology or for the sake of bringing together the names of the three great Persians, who were benefactors of the Jewish race. But the reading is attested by the LXX. version, and by 1 Esd. vii. 4. We must therefore suppose that the Compiler has in this passage as well as in iv. 6—23 disregarded the chronology of the context and anticipated later history.

15. The date here given is the 3rd of Adar (the 12th month) in the 6th year of Darius (516—515). The month Adar is about equivalent to

month Adar, which *was in* the sixth year of the reign of
16 Darius the king. And the children of Israel, the priests,
and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity,
17 kept the dedication of this house of God with joy, and
offered at the dedication of this house of God an hundred

our March. The name seems to be derived from an Assyrian god 'Adar', which appears in such names as Adrammelech. Haggai (i. 15) mentions that the work had been recommenced on the 24th day of the 6th month (Elul = September) in the 2nd year of Darius. It had therefore been going on for nearly $4\frac{1}{2}$ years. But the foundations had been laid twenty years previously, B.C. 536 (see Ezr. iii. 8).

Another date, the 23rd of Adar, is given in 1 Esd. vii. 5. To account for this variation, it has been suggested that the last 8 days of the year would to a scribe seem best suited for the celebration of such a festival as that of the dedication (compare the 8 days in 2 Chron. xxix. 17). In order that the regular services of the Temple might seem to have been resumed with the new year, he represented this festival as commencing on the 23rd of the 12th month. This is almost too ingenious. Either the figure 'twenty' has accidentally been omitted in the text of our verse, or, as seems equally probable (since the LXX. supports the Hebrew text here), the composer of 1 Esdras has mistaken some letter for the symbol or contraction which represented the number.

16. *the children of Israel*] Cf. the application of the term 'Israel' in ii. 70, iii. 1. In its special religious significance, its use here is appropriate to the sacredness of the event, in which the people were engaged, while it tends to clear the Jewish community from the charge of exclusiveness towards their own brethren. 'The priests and Levites and the rest of the children of the Captivity'. Under these heads, the Israelites would be grouped at such a festival, cf. ver. 20. 'Children of the Captivity'. See on i. 11, ii. 1. Cf. ver. 19.

dedication] Called in the Greek Encænia (ἐγκαίνια, LXX.), and in Hebrew 'Khanukah', the same word which gives its name to the Feast of the Dedication, founded to commemorate the purification of the Temple after the pollution of Antiochus Epiphanes (164), cf. John x. 22. That festival was kept for eight days (cf. 1 Macc. iv. 60) and began on 25th of Chislev (the 9th month).

with joy] Some have suggested in connexion with this joyous occasion that the Pss. cxlv.—cxlviii., called in the LXX. Psalms of Haggai and Zechariah, may have been composed at this period. But proof is wanting.

17. *and offered*] R.V. **And they offered.** A fresh sentence: ver. 16 treated of the general festivities: this verse describes the special sacrificial offerings.

at the dedication of this house] These words evidently imply a comparison between the modest sacrifices offered at this dedication and the enormous number offered by Solomon at the dedication of the first Temple (1 Kings viii. 5, 63). Solomon offered then for 'the sacrifice

bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin offering for all Israel, twelve he goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel. And they set the priests in 18
their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, which *is* at Jerusalem; as it is written in the book of Moses.

of peace-offerings...two and twenty thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep'. The numbers also mentioned in connexion with the dedication-festivals of Hezekiah (2 Chron. xxx. 24) and Josiah (2 Chron. xxxv. 7) very largely exceed the offerings of Zerubbabel and his companions.

The decay of material wealth and splendour must have vividly impressed itself upon the mind of many a patriot Jew, who looked only for a renewal of worldly empire. To them it must have seemed 'a day of small things' (Zech. iv. 10) by the side of the recollections of the kingdom.

a sin offering for all Israel, twelve he goats &c.] Compare Num. vii. 87, 'and the males of the goats for a sin-offering twelve', at the dedication of the altar. It is noticeable that in the reign of Hezekiah, at the purification of the Temple, we are told 'they brought seven bullocks, and seven rams, and seven lambs, and seven he-goats, for a sin offering for the kingdom and for the sanctuary and for Judah' (2 Chron. xxix. 21). The number 'seven' there denotes the consecration, the number 'twelve' here denotes the ideal unity, of the community. The sin offering 'of twelve he-goats according to the number of the tribes of Israel', was an incident full of deep religious pathos. The remnant who had returned make solemn confession of sin in the name of the whole scattered and dispersed race. They acknowledge the essential unity of Israel's tribes alike in the consequences of sin, in the possibilities of restoration, and in the renewed consecration to God's service.

The symbolical representation of a restored and ideal Israel is thus indicated by the verse (cf. ii. 2, 70, viii. 35). We need not necessarily assume (as some commentators) that each tribe was literally represented upon the occasion. Compare the prophet's picture of a reunited Israel (Ezek. xxxvii. 15—28) and Elijah's offering on Mt. Carmel, 1 Kings xviii. 31.

18. *the priests in their divisions*, &c.] The verse refers to the organization of the priests and Levites described in 1 Chron. xxiii.—xxvi. According to this arrangement, the service of the Temple was distributed by periods, of a week each, among the courses and divisions of priests and Levites (see 2 Kings xi. 9; 2 Chron. xxiii. 4).

On the "divisions" of the priests, see Luke i. 5, 8, 9.

for the service of God] 'Service', the same word as that rendered 'work' in iv. 24. But there 'the work of the house of God' refers to the building; here 'the work or service of God' refers to the worship. Compare the word 'liturgy' (λειτουργία) and the growth of its special application.

as it is written in the book of Moses] The reference seems to be to

19 And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon
20 the fourteenth *day* of the first month. For the priests and the Levites were purified together, all of them *were* pure, and killed the passover for all the children of the captivity,
21 and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves. And

the Levitical arrangements generally upon which the Davidic and Solomonic organization was founded, as described in the books of Chronicles. Special mention of the ordering of the priests and Levites occurs in Num. iii. and viii.

This verse concludes the Aramaic section (iv. 8—vi. 18).

19. The Hebrew is here resumed.

the children of the captivity] cf. ver. 16, viii. 35.

kept the passover] on the 14th of the 1st month (Nisan) as was commanded in Ex. xii. 6. Very few celebrations of the Passover are recorded. Besides the original occasion of the Passover, we only read in the O.T. of its being kept (1) under Moses on the second year after the Exodus (Num. ix. 5), (2) under Joshua at Gilgal after the reconsecration of the people by the rite of circumcision (Jos. v. 10), (3) in the reign of Hezekiah, after the purification of the Temple (2 Chron. xxx. 1, 2, ff.), (4) in the reign of Josiah, after the religious reformation (2 Kings xxiii. 21; 2 Chron. xxxv.), (5) under Zerubbabel and Jeshua.

On each of these occasions the celebration of the Passover marks a new or a restored order of worship, and the solemn rededication by the people of their Covenant relation with God.

20. The explanatory 'for' means that this celebration of the Passover could take place, because the priests and Levites had duly prepared themselves for it by ceremonial purification.

the priests and the Levites were purified together, all of them were *pure*] R.V. **the priests and the Levites had purified themselves together** (Heb. *as one*); **all of them were pure.** 'Had purified themselves': the reflexive is the accurate rendering of the original.

together] Lit. 'as one': see ii. 64, iii. 9.

The rendering of the R.V. represents the ceremonial purification to have been jointly performed by priests and Levites, who were therefore all 'pure' and capable of sacrificial acts. The only difficulty arises from the following clause. How can it be said that 'the *priests and Levites* killed the passover...for *their brethren the priests*, and for themselves?' The words 'for their brethren the priests' shew that the subject of the last clause must be the Levites alone; and that the mention of the priests belongs to the two first clauses. Compare 2 Chron. xxix. 34, 'their brethren the Levites did help them, till the work was ended, and until the priests had sanctified themselves: for the Levites were more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests' (cf. 2 Chron. xxx. 3). The small number of Levites who had returned were, we must suppose, more rigid followers of the ceremonial law than their brethren the priests, numerically a far larger body.

for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the

the children of Israel, which were come again out of captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the

priests, and for themselves] The triple division of the community: see ver. 16.

The Levites are here represented as slaying the Paschal lamb. Three stages of custom as to the slaughter of the lamb are recorded in Scripture. (*a*) Originally, the lamb was slain by the head of each household (see Ex. xii. 6): (*b*) in the days of Hezekiah (2 Chron. xxx. 17) the Levites 'killed the passovers for every one that was not clean': (*c*) in the days of Josiah (2 Chron. xxxv. 10—14) the Levites seem to have slain all the passover lambs, and roasted them both for the people, and for the priests, and for themselves.

The object of the alteration in the custom was twofold; (1) to secure the ceremonial purity of those entrusted with the duty of slaying the passover, (2) to relieve the priests, who at the season of the feast were busied in other offerings; see 2 Chron. xxxv. 14, "therefore the Levites prepared for themselves, and for the priests the sons of Aaron".

The above is a useful illustration of the manner in which the absolute rule of the early law was modified in later times out of regard for considerations of a purely practical character (cf. iii. 8, note on "twenty years old and upward").

21. Those who partook of the Passover are described as belonging to two classes; (1) those who had returned from captivity, (2) those who had 'separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land'.

"The heathen of the land" (goyyê ha-âreṣ) is to be compared with "the peoples of the land" ('amme ha-âreṣ) in chap. x. 2, 11. "The land" is the land of Palestine: "the heathen" and "the peoples" are apparently the colonists and mixed population that had settled in the territory of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. 'The filthiness' (cf. ix. 11) is the ceremonial pollution of idolatry practised by these heathen races.

Who then are those described here as having 'separated themselves'?

(*a*) By very many they are considered to be proselytes from the heathen who had attached themselves to the Jewish religion since the return from the Captivity.

(*b*) But it appears most probable that they are Israelites.

(1) Israelites are described in ix. 1 as not having "separated themselves from the peoples of the lands". (2) Ezra exhorts the Jews to "separate themselves from the peoples of the lands" (x. 11). If those who had not 'separated' themselves were Israelites, it is probable that these who *had* separated themselves were also Israelites; and if so, they would be those Israelites who had not been carried into captivity, but had continued to dwell in Palestine or among the adjoining races.

The two classes mentioned therefore are both Israelite; the one, those who had returned from Babylon; the other, those who having remained behind and having mixed with "the heathen of the land"

22 LORD God of Israel, did eat, and kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the LORD had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

7 Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of

now separated themselves and attached themselves once more to their countrymen.

to seek the LORD God of Israel] R.V. **to seek the LORD, the God of Israel.** See on chap. i. 3. To seek, i.e. with a view to worship: cf. on iv. 2.

22. *seven days*] see Ex. xii. 15.

had made them joyful] the same phrase in the original as that rendered in 2 Chron. xx. 27, "for the Lord had made them to rejoice" R.V. Neh. xii. 43, "For God had made them rejoice".

and turned the heart] R.V. **had turned the heart.** Vulg. "convertit cor", cf. same expression as in 1 Kings xviii. 37. The verb is different from that used in the similar phrase in Mal. iv. 6 (cf. Luke i. 17).

of the king of Assyria] This is a strange expression to be used of a Persian king. For by the context it naturally refers to Darius.

(1) It has been said that Darius is so called because the Persian kings were the successors to the great Assyrian empire.

(2) It has been suggested that all Western Asia might be termed Assyria.

(3) It has been supposed that Darius is not personally referred to, but that the power of Western Asia is symbolized by the name of Assyria, Israel's traditional foe. (But to the Jew, after the Captivity, the symbolical hostile power is Babylon.)

Of these views the first is the most probable. See note on v. 13 (Cyrus king of Babylon). Perhaps however the phrase is a copyist's error.

strengthen their hands] Cf. Neh. ii. 18, vi. 9; Judg. vii. 11; Isai. xxxv. 3.

in the work of the house &c.] Cf. iii. 8, 9.

PART II. THE RETURN UNDER EZRA.

vii. **1—10.** A brief summary: Ezra's genealogy (1—5), arrival at Jerusalem (6—10).

11—26. Ezra's commission from the king Artaxerxes.

27—28. Ezra's Thanksgiving.

viii. **1—20.** The list of those that went up with Ezra to Jerusalem.

21—36. The events of the journey: 21—30 preparations for the journey, (*a*) 21—23 rendezvous and fast at Ahava, (*b*) 24—30 the care of the treasure: (*c*) 31—36 the arrival at Jerusalem, transfer of the treasure, declaration of the mission.

ix. **1—4.** The people's sin.

5—15. Ezra's confession.

Persia, Ezra the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah, the son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of 2

x. 1—5. The acknowledgment of guilt and the people's covenant.
6—15. The assembly and the reform.
16—17. The inquiry.
18—44. The list of offenders.

Ch. vii. 1—10. A brief Summary of Events.

1—5. Ezra's Genealogy.

Now after these things] An interval of 58 years is passed over in silence (516—458). One allusion has already been made to the reign of Xerxes (ch. iv. 6). But with this exception the Compiler apparently found nothing to record of historic importance in the formation of the new religious community at Jerusalem during the period which elapsed between the completion of the Temple and the accession of Artaxerxes. The story of Esther belongs to Xerxes' reign, which belongs to the chronicles of 'the Dispersion'. It has no part in the development of the Jewish constitution. 'Now after these things'. A not infrequent phrase combining connexion ('now' or 'and') with the previous narrative and statement of indefinite interval. Cf. Gen. xv. 1, xxii. 1; Luke x. 1.

in the reign of Artaxerxes] Artaxerxes the son of Xerxes began to reign in 465 B.C.

Ezra, the son of Seraiah &c.] Ezra's genealogy is here traced back to Aaron.

(*a*) His immediate connexion with the high-priestly line is through Seraiah. He is therefore here called 'the son of Seraiah', although Seraiah was High-priest in the days of king Zedekiah and was slain at Riblah by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings xxv. 18—21) in 588 B.C. (i.e. 130 years before). Inasmuch as (1) the High-priest Jeshua (538) is described as the son of Jehozadak, (2) neither of these names occurs in Ezra's genealogy, (3) Jehozadak was the eldest son of Seraiah (1 Chron. vi. 14) succeeding to the High-priesthood, we conclude that Ezra was descended from a younger son of Seraiah.

(*b*) In this genealogy 15 names occur between Ezra and Aaron. This is manifestly too small a number for a period of about 1000 years (reckoning 30 years to a generation), especially when we find 26 names recorded between Zerubbabel (who was of the previous generation to that of Ezra) and Nashon, prince of Judah, the contemporary of Aaron, in 1 Chron. ii. 10—15, iii. 1—19.

Ezra's genealogy therefore appears here in an abbreviated form. We are enabled in a great measure, if not completely, to fill up its lacunæ by means of (*a*) Ezra's genealogy in the parallel passage, 1 Esd. viii. 1, 2, (*b*) in 2 Esd. i. 1—3, (*c*) the genealogy of the High-priests Jehozadak and Seraiah in 1 Chron. vi. 3—15, (*d*) in 1 Chron. ix. 10, 11; Neh. xi. 11.

The full genealogy then appears as follows:

1 Aaron, 2 Eleazar, 3 Phinehas, 4 Abishua, 5 Bukki, 6 Uzzi,

3 Ahitub, the son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of
4 Meraioth, the son of Zerahiah, the son of Uzzi, the son of

7 Zerahiah, 8 Meraioth, 9 *Amariah*, 10 *Ahitub*, 11 *Zadok*, 12 *Ahimaaz*, 13 *Azariah*, 14 *Johanan*, 15 Azariah, 16 Amariah, 17 *Heli* (?), 18 *Phinehas* (?), 19 *Ahiah*, 20 Ahitub, 21 *Meraioth* (see 1 Chron. ix. 11), 22 Zadok, 23 Shallum, Meshullam (1 Chron. ix. 11), 24 Hilkiah, 25 Azariah, 26 Seraiah, 27 son of Seraiah, 28 (?), contemporary with Zerubbabel, 29 father of Ezra, 30 Ezra.

Of these names 9—14 occur in 1 Chron. vi. 7—10: 21 in 1 Chron. ix. 11: 17, 18, 19 in 2 Esdras i. 2 are doubtful. At least *three* and possibly *four* generations must be inserted between Seraiah (died 588) and Ezra (? died circ. 430), the names being here omitted because they were not High-priests.

(*c*) Why does Ezra's genealogy appear in this abbreviated form, if the materials of a fuller one were accessible to the compiler of our book in the materials of the book 'Chronicles'?

(i) Jewish genealogies were often abbreviated by the omission of unimportant or dishonourable names, for the sake of securing a shorter list or an arrangement of names more easily remembered (see Gen. xi. 13; cf. Luke iii. 36 and Matt. i. 8).

It is possible that the present genealogy was artificially arranged. By reference to 1 Chron. vi. 10, we find that Azariah (ver. 3) is there specially described as 'having executed the priest's office in the house that Solomon built in Jerusalem'. Azariah's name therefore represents the age of the foundation of the Temple, just as Aaron's name represents the foundation of the Levitical system, Ezra's its reconstitution. It is noteworthy that between Ezra and Azariah there are seven names, between Azariah and Aaron seven names: the first group contains the names of High-priests before the setting up of the Monarchy and before the Temple was built, the second group contains the list of the High-priests during the Monarchy down to the destruction of Jerusalem. It is possible that this twofold arrangement of seven names placed between the two names representative of the foundation and the revival of the Mosaic system, and linked by the name representative of the Temple, may be the explanation of the abbreviation (cf. the threefold grouping by 'fourteen' in Matt. i. 1—16).

(ii) On the other hand it must be granted that a list containing two trios of Amariah, Ahitub, Zadok, *three* Azariahs, *two* Amariahs, and a Meraioth could easily give rise to errors in transcription; a copyist's eye passing from one similar name or termination to another. It is thus quite possible that after Azariah (No. 15) the copyist accidentally passed on to Meraioth (No. 8) which followed the similarly sounding Amariah.

It is clear from the fewness of the names and from the omission of all names after Seraiah that the genealogy cannot pretend to be complete. The view that the six names (9—14) have *accidentally* dropped from the text, rests on the omission of the renowned Zadok and Ahimaaz, whose names we should naturally expect to find inserted in a list of Ezra's forefathers (1 Chron. vi. 8).

Bukki, the son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of 5
Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest: this Ezra went up 6
from Babylon; and he *was* a ready scribe in the law of

Hilkiah] the celebrated High-priest of the reign of Josiah: see 2 Kings xxii. 4, &c.; 2 Chron. xxxiv. 14, &c.

5. *Phinehas, the son of Eleazar*] his religious zeal (Num. xxv. 7—11) was celebrated in the records and songs of Israel (Ps. cvi. 30). As High-priest he appears probably on two occasions Jos. xxii. 13, 30, 32; Judg. xx. 28.

Aaron the chief priest] Literally the 'head-priest' (hak-kohen harôsh). By this title the High-priest was sometimes designated in writings of the Captivity and post-Captivity periods, e.g. 2 Chron. xix. 11, xxiv. (6), 11, xxvi. 20, xxxi. 10. The earliest instances are 2 Kings xxv. 18; Jer. lii. 24. Before the period of the Captivity he is generally called "the priest". The name High-priest (literally 'the great priest') only rarely occurs in the Pentateuch, Levit. xxi. 10; Num. xxxv. 25, 28; though more frequently in books of late date, e.g. 2 Kings xii. 10.

LXX. 'the first priest' (τοῦ ἱέρεως τοῦ πρώτου). Vulg. 'sacerdotis ab initio'.

6—10. Arrival at Jerusalem.

6. *went up from Babylon*] i.e. to Jerusalem, cf. i. 11, ii. 1. It will be observed that this description of Ezra is given in the 3rd person. At ver. 27 there is a change to the 1st person.

and he was *a ready scribe in the law of Moses*] Cf. vv. 10, 12.

'the scribe' (Hebr. Sophêr) in the days of the Monarchy was the king's State Secretary or Chancellor. Cf. Seraiah, the scribe (2 Sam. viii. 17), Sheva, the scribe (2 Sam. xx. 25) = Shavsha (1 Chron. xviii. 16): Elihoreph and Ahijah, scribes (1 Kings iv. 3): Shebna, the scribe (2 Kings xviii. 18, &c.): Shaphan, the scribe (2 Kings xxii. 3). Cf. Gemariah (Jer. xxxvi. 10), Elishama (Jer. xxxvi. 12), Jonathan (Jer. xxxvii. 15).

During the latter days of the Monarchy, the name began to receive a special meaning as applied to those who were occupied in studying and copying the documents containing the sacred laws of the nation, e.g. Jer. viii. 8 'How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us? But, behold, the false pen of the scribes hath wrought falsely'.

After the Captivity, the increased importance of the written law and the necessity of explaining its obligation upon the people brought 'the scribes' into great prominence. 'The scribe' took the place of the prophet and, in his influence upon his countrymen, eclipsed the priest. The name of Ezra is associated with the development of 'the scribe' and he is designated 'the scribe' as by an honourable title in vii. 11, and Neh. viii. 1. He was the typical representative and in a measure the founder of the later type of scribes. Devoted to the minute study of the written law, he sought to expound it to his people

Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of
7 the LORD his God upon him. And there went up *some* of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, unto

and to impress upon them the duty of its rigid observance. (See Introduction.) To the same class perhaps belonged 'the teachers' mentioned in viii. 16, and 'Zadok the scribe' (Neh. xiii. 13).

The word 'ready' is the same as appears elsewhere in the O.T. only in Ps. xlv. 1 'a *ready* writer'. Prov. xxii. 29 '*diligent* in his business'. Isai. xvi. 5 '*swift* to do righteousness'. A 'ready scribe' would be one prompt and skilful in interpreting the difficulties of the law. His quickness is the dexterity of his erudition, not of his pen.

the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given] R.V. **the Lord the God of Israel**, cf. i. 3. 'The law of Moses', see iii. 2, vi. 18, and cf. 1 Kings ii. 3, 2 Kings xiv. 6, xxi. 8.

The Divine origin of the law is here asserted with reverent emphasis. The expression is well illustrated by Mal. iv. 4 'the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, even statutes and judgements' and Neh. viii. 14 'The law which the LORD had commanded by Moses'.

all his request] What the request was, which Ezra preferred to Artaxerxes, we are not told, but are left to gather it from the letter of Artaxerxes (12—26). The word 'request' in the Hebrew denotes an eager quest, and occurs elsewhere in the O.T. only in the book of Esther (v. 3, 7, 8, vii. 3, ix. 12).

according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him] This expression is characteristic of the writer. It occurs again ver. 28, with the adjective 'good', ver. 9, viii. 18; Neh. ii. 8, 18, and in a slightly different form viii. 22, 31. 'The hand of the LORD' denotes the merciful favour, as may be seen from the context here and in ver. 28, even without the addition of the adjective good: cf. 'the eye of the LORD', chap. v. 5. Similar is the phrase in 2 Chron. xxx. 12. From that 'hand' comes discipline as well as bounty, Job ii. 10 'Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?' xix. 21 'the hand of God hath touched me'. In adversity 'the hand of the Lord' is described as '*against*', not 'upon' a person. See Deut. ii. 15; Ruth i. 13.

7. *And there went up* some *of the children of Israel*] For "some of" compare ii. 70.

some *of the children of Israel*] i.e. a portion of the lay element of the Jewish community at Babylon, mainly of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, cf. ii. 2 'the men of the people of Israel'.

The division into Priests, Levites, Singers, Porters, Nethinim, as in chap. ii. 36, 40, 41, 42, 43.

the Levites] The difficulty of obtaining Levites to accompany the caravan is described in viii. 15—21.

Nethinims] R.V. **Nethinim**, see note on ii. 43.

Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king. And 8
he came *to* Jerusalem in the fifth month, which *was in* the
seventh year of the king. For upon the first *day* of the first 9
month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first *day*
of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the

the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king] i.e. 458 B.C.

8. *And he came*] This verse resumes ver. 6. 'He came' at the same time with those enumerated in ver. 7. The importance of this journey to Jerusalem centres in Ezra.

the fifth month] This was the month Ab, the Assyrian Abu, corresponding roughly with our 'August'.

9. *began he to go up*] R.V. marg. Heb. *that was the foundation of the going up.* The R.V. and A.V. paraphrase the words.

The Hebrew text is intelligible; but (1) the word as here vocalized is very unusual, (2) the metaphor is ponderous and awkward, (3) the construction, shown in a literal translation "for upon the first day of the first month—that (i.e. that month) was the foundation of the going up from Babylon—and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem", is almost intolerably involved and harsh, especially as the verb 'came' in the latter half of the verse has no subject expressed in the original, and presupposes the mention of a subject in an earlier clause.

The LXX. render "for upon the first day of the first month he (i.e. Ezra) laid the foundation of his going up" (*αὐτὸς ἐθεμελίωσε τὴν ἀνάβασιν*), treating the word rendered "foundation" as a simple verb (i.e. 'yasad' for 'y'sûd'), cf. Vulg. 'cœpit adscendere'.

Another method of explaining the verse makes Ezra the subject and reads the disputed word as if it were an intensive form (i.e. 'yissêd') of the verb "to lay the foundation of", with the meaning 'appoint', as in Esther i. 8 "the king had *appointed*". This gives a good sense, as follows;

'On the first day &c. he (i.e. Ezra) had appointed or determined to go up (the going up)'.

The rendezvous apparently took place on the 9th day of the 1st month (Nisan), and the journey did not commence until the 12th day (see chap. viii. 15 and 31).

upon the first day *of the first month*] i.e. 1st of Nisan (=Assyrian Nisanu), part of March and April.

on the first day *of the fifth month*] The journey lasted throughout 18 days of Nisan, and the three months Iyyar, Sivan, and Tammuz; in all about 108 days. As the crow flies, the distance from Babylon to Jerusalem is over 500 miles. But the road followed by Ezra's caravan made a long detour by Carchemish so as to avoid the desert, and could hardly have been less than 900 miles. As the march was taken in the height of summer (April—August), the travellers probably moved only in the early morning and at night. A caravan with women and children and household effects would move more slowly than a trained and

10 good hand of his God upon him. For Ezra had prepared
his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do *it*, and to
11 teach in Israel statutes and judgments. Now this *is* the copy

lightly equipped force. There is nothing therefore in the length of time spent in the march to cause any surprise. See on viii. 32.

according to the good hand of his God &c.] Cf. note on verse 6.

10. *For Ezra had prepared* (R. V. **set**) *his heart* &c.] The precise meaning of the 'for' which determines the connexion of the verse, is not very evident. The verse *either* explains the preceding clause and attributes God's favour towards Ezra during the journey to the latter's devotion to the Divine Law, *or* is added as a general comment on the whole preceding section, explanatory of Ezra's resolve and expedition. Those who take the former view illustrate it by ch. viii. 31, 32. But the latter interpretation of the verse is to be preferred. It corresponds better with the somewhat abrupt mention of Ezra's rule of life. It harmonizes with the description of Ezra's character. 'Ezra had set his heart &c.' That fact lay at the bottom of the religious movement which he set on foot. It explained something very much more than the mere fortunate issue of the journey.

'Had set his heart'. A not uncommon phrase, cf. 2 Chron. xii. 14, xix. 3, xxx. 19. In every instance the R.V. has rightly changed 'prepare his heart' to 'set his heart'. The idea of the original is not 'preparedness for the unforeseen', but 'fixity and stability of purpose'. Compare the expression 'my heart is fixed' (Ps. lvii. 7, cviii. 1, cxii. 7) where the same verb occurs.

to seek the law of the LORD] Cf. Ps. cxix. 45, 155; 1 Chron. xxviii. 8. The search, no mere investigation of the letter, but for the sake of ascertaining the true principles of practical life embodied in the law, cf. 2 Chron. xiv. 4 '(Asa) commanded Judah to *seek* the LORD the God of their fathers, and to *do* the law and the commandment'.

and to teach] Those principles are self-diffusive, the teaching by example as much as by precept, cf. 2 Chron. xvii. 9 'And they (the priests) taught in Judah, having the book of the law with them'. Ezra's purpose to *search* for truth, to *live* by it and to *teach* it his countrymen is an epitome of the ideal scribe's career. We may compare Acts i. 1 'All that Jesus began both to *do* and to *teach*'.

statutes and judgments] These words in the Hebrew are singular, and are rendered 'a statute and an ordinance' in Ex. xv. 25; Jos. xxiv. 25, where they are found together. The singular is generic. The two words are frequently found together in the plural: e.g. Lev. xxvi. 46; Deut. iv. 1, 5, 8, 14, v. 1, 31, xi. 32, xii. 1 &c.; 2 Chron. vii. 17, xix. 10 and Mal. iv. 4 'statutes and judgments'. 'Statutes' are the appointed rules or regulations of conduct or ceremony, 'judgments' are the duties and rights determined by equity, authority, or custom. The phrase is however used very generally without any close distinction in the shades of meaning.

11—26. ARTAXERXES' COMMISSION TO EZRA.

11. *Now*] Cf. ver. 1. This verse serves as a brief introduction.

of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest, the scribe, *even* a scribe of the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of his statutes to Israel.

12 Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect *peace*, and at such a time. 13 I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and *of* his priests and Levites, in my realm, *which are* minded of their own freewill to go *up* to Jerusalem, go with thee.

the copy of the letter] See on iv. 7, 11, 23.

Ezra the priest, the scribe] See note on vv. 1—5 for Ezra's priestly lineage. He is called 'the priest' ch. x. 10, 16; Neh. viii. 2; and so commonly was this designation given him, that the title of 1 Esdras appears in the Alexandrian MS. (Cod. A) as ὁ ἱερεύς 'the priest'. He is called 'the scribe', Neh. viii. 4, 13, xii. 36. He receives the twofold appellation here and elsewhere in verses 12, 21; Neh. viii. 9, xii. 26.

even *a scribe*] R.V. **even the scribe**. The LXX. rendering 'the scribe of the book of the words of the commandments of the LORD' (τῷ γραμματεῖ βιβλίου λόγων ἐντολῶν τοῦ κυρίου) was due to its misunderstanding the repetition of the word 'scribe', and reading 'sêpher' 'a book', instead of 'sophêr' 'scribe'.

12—26. The contents of the letter are given in Aramaic.

12. *king of kings*] title common in inscriptions of Persian monarchs. (Cf. of Nebuchadnezzar, Ezek. xxvi. 7; Dan. ii. 37.) No mere hyperbole, when the great empire included so many subject kingdoms.

a scribe] R.V. **the scribe**.

the God of heaven] See note on i. 2.

perfect peace, *and at such a time*] R.V. **perfect and so forth**. The Aramaic word 'perfect', 'g'mir', occurs only here. The salutation, probably a lengthy affair, is here condensed and the sentence breaks off abruptly. The word 'perfect' refers to 'the scribe' Ezra and was probably the first of a series of complimentary epithets. So the Vulgate 'doctissimo'. The A.V. understands the words of salutation, cf. 1 Esdras, 'hail' (χαίρειν). The LXX. 'the word has been ended and the answer' (τετέλεσται ὁ λόγος καὶ ἡ ἀπόκρισις) is completely at fault. Others render the word as an adverb (='completely'), to be connected either with 'the scribe', or with the omitted words of salutation, i.e. the completely (learned) scribe', or 'full greetings'.

'and so forth', as in iv. 10, 11.

13. Permission to Jews to return with Ezra to Jerusalem.

I make a decree] The same phrase as in iv. 19, vi. 8, 11.

all they of the people of Israel] Cf. Cyrus's decree i. 3 'Whosoever there is among all his people'. Here, by the side of 'the priests and Levites', the expression, as in ver. 27, should be compared with ii. 2.

of *his priests*] R.V. **their priests**, i.e. the priests of the people.

14 Forasmuch as *thou art* sent of the king, and of his seven counsellers, to enquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem,
15 according to the law of thy God which *is* in thine hand; and to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellers have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose habi-
16 tation *is* in Jerusalem, and all the silver and gold that thou canst find in all the province of Babylon, with the freewill offering of the people, and of the priests, offering willingly
17 for the house of their God which *is* in Jerusalem: that thou mayest buy speedily with this money bullocks, rams, lambs,

14. Object of the commission: (*a*) to investigate.

of the king, and of his seven counsellers] R.V. marg. Aram. '*from before the king*'.

'The counsellers' are mentioned again vv. 15, 28. 'The seven' here spoken of should be compared with 'the seven princes of Persia and Media, which saw the king's face, and sat first in the kingdom' (Esth. i. 14).

to enquire] R.V. **to inquire.** Same word in the original as 'to make search' in iv. 15. The object of the enquiry is not defined except by the clause 'according to the law of thy God'; from which we must conclude that the moral and religious condition of the Jews at Jerusalem having occasioned anxiety to the Jews at Babylon, Ezra, who in some way enjoyed the favour of the court, obtained permission to enquire generally into the position.

Judah and Jerusalem] Cf. v. 1.

according to the law] Literally 'with, or, through the law'.

which is *in thine hand*] Not a book in Ezra's private possession, but the law of the Israelite people, in which Ezra was reputed to be the best instructed of his day.

15. (*b*) To carry (i) the gifts of the king and his council.

to carry] The LXX. mistaking two very similar letters (reading ב for כ) render εἰς οἶκον κυρίου.

whose habitation is *in Jerusalem*] i.e. whose temple is in Jerusalem.

16. (ii) The gifts of the king's subjects in Babylon, (iii) freewill offerings of Jewish priests and people.

that thou canst find] R.V. **that thou shalt find.** Permission is granted to Ezra to ask for contributions from the people of the province of Babylon. Many would be ready to assist the Jews who had lived among them for a hundred and thirty years.

province of Babylon] Cf. Dan. ii. 48, 49, iii. 1, &c. On 'the province of the Medes' see vi. 2, 'the province of Judah' v. 8.

with the freewill offering] i.e. along with, over and above, the voluntary contributions of their Jewish countrymen.

17. Purpose of the gifts and offerings: (i) sacrifices.

that thou mayest buy speedily] R.V. **therefore thou shalt buy with**

with their meat offerings and their drink offerings, and offer them upon the altar of the house of your God which *is* in Jerusalem. And whatsoever shall seem good to thee, and 18
to thy brethren, to do with the rest of the silver and gold, *that* do after the will of your God. The vessels also that *are* 19
given thee for the service of the house of thy God, *those* deliver thou before the God of Jerusalem. And whatsoever 20
more *shall be* needful for the house of thy God, which thou shalt have occasion to bestow, bestow *it* out of the king's treasure house. And I, *even* I Artaxerxes the king, do make 21
a decree to all the treasurers which *are* beyond the river,

all diligence; 'therefore', i.e. because of the gifts received from the crown, the Babylonians and the Jews.

'with all diligence', see note on v. 8. The sacrifices here mentioned, as in vi. 9, 10, consist of burnt offerings (bullocks, rams, lambs), with their accompanying 'meal' and 'drink-offerings', Num. xv. 1—16.

meat offerings] R.V. **meal offerings** (i.e. 'Minkhah', as always in R.V.).

18. (ii) General purposes.

that *do after the will of your God*] R.V. **that do ye after** &c. The command is given to Ezra and his brethren, i.e. the priests. They who disposed of the money expended upon the sacrifices, were to determine as to the disposition of the remainder.

the will of your God] with reference here to the Law.

19. *The vessels also*...those] R.V. **And the vessels.** The vessels here mentioned are probably those enumerated chap. viii. 25—27, gifts (*ἀναθήματα*) to the Temple from the king and from individuals. Quite separate from the sacred vessels (i. 7) restored by Cyrus.

for the service of &c.] A word occurring only here, connected with the word rendered A.V. 'ministers', R.V. 'servants' in verse 24. LXX. translates by *λειτουργίαν*, Vulgate 'ministerium'.

before the God of Jerusalem] A remarkable expression, probably a condensed form for 'before the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem' (ver. 15).

20. Permission to draw, for further expenditure, upon the king's treasury, i.e. upon the sums in the local treasury, which the satrap paid annually out of the tribute money into the king's treasury at Susa or Ecbatana.

out of the king's treasure house] See note on vi. 8 'of the king's goods even of the tribute beyond the river, &c.' The treasury of the satrapy of the country W. of the Euphrates (Abhar-Nahara). Cf. 'the king's treasure house' v. 17, 'the king's house' vi. 4.

21. Credit to Ezra to be granted on local treasuries W. of the Euphrates. Limit of credit stated in verse 22.

treasurers] Officials to be found in each satrapy and province,

that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, *it* be done speedily,
22 unto an hundred talents *of* silver, and to an hundred measures *of* wheat, and to an hundred baths *of* wine, and to an hundred baths *of* oil, and salt without prescribing *how much.*
23 Whatsoever *is* commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven: for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his

(LXX. ταῖς γάζαις. Vulg. 'custodibus arcæ publicæ'). On 'gizbar' a treasurer cf. i. 8.

beyond the river] i.e. this decree only applied to the financiers of the particular satrapy to which Jerusalem belonged.

Ezra the priest, the scribe, &c.] See on ver 12.

of you] The decree here addresses 'the treasurers'.

speedily] R.V. **with all diligence.**

22. *unto an hundred talents* of *silver*] or £37,500. Money reckoned by weight. A 'kikkar' or talent of silver was of value about £375. A talent contained 60 manim or 3000 shekels, cf. on ii. 69.

an hundred measures of *wheat*] The 'measure' or 'cor', equivalent to 8 bushels or 1 quarter. We learn from Ezek. xlv. 14 that the 'cor' contained 10 'baths' and was the same as the 'homer', see also 1 Kings iv. 22, v. 11; 2 Chron. ii. 10, xxvii. 5.

an hundred baths of *wine*] The 'bath' contained 6 or 7 gallons (=hins).

salt without prescribing how much] The importance of salt in the sacrificial system appears from Levit. ii. 13 'And every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt, neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering: with all thine oblations thou shalt offer salt', cf. vi. 9; Ezek. xliii. 24. The translation of the A.V. and R.V. gives the general sense of the original (='which is not written'); LXX. οὗ οὐκ ἐστιν γραφή. The Vulg. 'absque mensura'.

23. *Whatsoever* is *commanded* &c.] literally, "Whatsoever is from the commandment", same word as in vi. 14.

let it be diligently done] R.V. **Let it be done exactly.** The word in the original 'adrazda', occurs only here; if, as is very probable, of Babylonian origin, it will mean "strenuously", being compounded of two words 'adar' abundance or excellence, 'azda' strength or firmness. Others assign it a Persian origin.

The A.V. follows on the line of the Vulgate 'tribuatur diligenter'.

The LXX. προσέχετε μή τις ἐπιχειρήση missed the meaning altogether.

for why should there be wrath &c.] Wrath 'q'çaph', like the Hebrew 'qeçeph', especially of Divine displeasure, cf. Jos. ix. 20; 1 Chron. xxvii. 24; 2 Chron. xix. 2, 10; Zech. i. 2, 15.

It is natural to connect this allusion to the Divine displeasure with the disasters which had overtaken the Persian Empire since the days of

sons? Also *we* certify you, that *touching* any of the priests 24
and Levites, singers, porters, Nethinims, or ministers of this
house of God, it *shall* not *be* lawful to impose toll, tribute, or
custom, upon them. And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of 25
thy God, that *is* in thine hand, set magistrates and judges,
which may judge all the people that *are* beyond the river, all
such as know the laws of thy God; and teach ye them that

Marathon, and more especially with the revolt of Egypt in the year 460 B.C. It was in this very year 458 that a Persian army was marched into Egypt to attempt its pacification.

The king desired to propitiate the wrath of the gods, and more especially to conciliate Divine favour upon the S.W. frontier.

the king and his sons] see note on vi. 10. The reference is to the dynasty generally, but Artaxerxes left sons behind him, and they may have been born at this time.

24. *Nethinims*] R.V. **Nethinim**, cf. ii. 43.

ministers] R.V. **servants.** The word in the original connected with that rendered "service" (ver. 19). The expression "or servants" would cover any other branch (e.g. Solomon's servants, ii. 55) of attendants on the Temple.

toll, tribute, or custom] R.V. **tribute, custom, or toll.** See on v. 13.

Compare immunity from all taxation described by Josephus as having been granted to the priests and Levites by Antiochus the Great (*Ant.* XII. 3. 3), "And let the senate and the priests and the scribes of the Temple and the sacred singers be discharged from all poll-money and the crown tax, and other taxes also." (Tran. Whiston.)

25. Ezra again addressed, empowered to appoint judges for Jews in the country W. of the Euphrates and to inflict penalties for the violation of the law.

after the wisdom of God, that is *in thine hand*] cf. ver. 14, 'the law of thy God which is in thy hand'. Law in its obligation, wisdom in its spirit.

magistrates and judges] The former is the same word as the 'Judges' (Shôphetim) of the book so called. The two words, if capable of distinction, represent administrative and judicial functions.

all such as know the laws of thy God] No authority save over those of Israelite race or Jewish religion. But this commission gave Ezra and the community at Jerusalem the right to exercise special powers over all countrymen in Syria, Phœnicia and Palestine.

and teach ye them that know them *not*] R.V. **and teach ye him that knoweth them not.** The injunction, expressed in the plural, seems to include the leaders of the Jews along with Ezra, with special reference to the 'magistrates and judges' to be appointed. The primary intention of this sentence is to ensure instruction in the Law for those Jews. who by living among the heathen had grown to neglect or to forget the obligations of their religion. It does not amount to a command 'to proselytize', but would, no doubt, include the instruction of proselytes, and grant general permission to teach the Jewish religion.

26 know *them* not. And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether *it be* unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.

27 Blessed *be* the LORD God of our fathers, which hath put *such a thing* as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house
28 of the LORD which *is* in Jerusalem: and hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counsellers, and before all the king's mighty princes. And I was strengthened

26. Penalty for Contumacy.

whosoever will not do] i.e. whoever of the Israelite race or of those that had attached themselves to the Jewish religion.

speedily] R.V. **with all diligence.**

death...banishment...confiscation...imprisonment] The king hands over to Ezra plenary powers of punishment.

banishment] R.V. marg. Aram. *rooting out.* LXX. παιδεία. Vulg. 'exilium'. 'Banishment' is probably the meaning of the word, coming as it does between 'death' and 'confiscation'. Some explain it of 'excommunication' or separation 'from the congregation'.

It is not to be supposed that Ezra's commission superseded the official governors of the satrapy. Rather his powers (1) to appoint judges, (2) to instruct, (3) to inflict penalties, were given him to secure the strengthening of the religious organization based on the Law, which it was his object to make permanent and universal for his countrymen.

27, 28. EZRA'S THANKSGIVING.

Abrupt transition from the letter of Artaxerxes to Ezra's thanksgiving. Compare chap. vi. 8, the transition from the quotation of Cyrus's decree to the words of Darius.

These two verses contain Ezra's outburst of praise to God for the favours conceded by Darius.

The Hebrew is here resumed.

27. *Blessed* be *the LORD God of our fathers*] R.V. **Blessed be the LORD, the God of our fathers.** A similar phrase occurs in viii. 28, x. 11. We find it elsewhere in 1 Chron. xxix. 18; 2 Chron. xx. 6. Cf. Acts iii. 13.

The thanksgiving of Ezra relates to the blessing which had been vouchsafed not to himself personally but to the whole nationality.

hath put into *the heart*] as in Neh. ii. 12, vii. 5; 1 Kings x. 24.

to beautify] This effect of the king's bounty would result from the general grant contained in vv. 14—20. The actual adornment of the Temple had not been specified.

28. *hath extended mercy unto me*] First usage of the 1st person, which continues to close of chap. ix. 'Hath extended mercy', cf. ix. 9; Gen. xxxix. 21.

his counsellers] see on ver. 14.

as the hand of the LORD my God *was* upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief *men* to go up with me.

These *are* now the chief of their fathers, and *this is* the 8
genealogy of them that went up with me from Babylon, in the reign of Artaxerxes the king. Of the sons of 2
Phinehas; Gershom: of the sons of Ithamar; Daniel: of the sons of David; Hattush. Of the sons of Shechaniah, 3

as the hand...was *upon*] R.V. **according to the hand**: see on ver. 6.

out of Israel] i.e. of the laity, cf. ii. 2.

chief men] literally, 'heads', cf. v. 10.

CHAP. VIII. 1—20. THE LIST OF THOSE THAT WENT UP WITH EZRA TO JERUSALEM.

(*a*) **1—14.** LIST OF THE HEADS OF FATHERS' HOUSES, ACCOMPANYING EZRA.

1. *These* are *now the chief of their fathers*] R.V. **Now these are the heads of their fathers'** *houses*. Literally, 'now these are the heads of their fathers', a shortened form of expression, as in ii. 68.

and this is *the genealogy of them*] In the following list we have the names both of the houses and of their chiefs or representatives.

On the word 'genealogy' see ii. 62. The LXX. οἱ ὁδηγοί.

2. The Priestly and Royal houses. The numbers from these houses are not given. They are placed in a position of honour at the head of the list.

Of the sons of Phinehas; Gershom] R.V. **Of the sons of Phinehas, Gershom.** The punctuation is corrected throughout 2—14.

The family of Phinehas (son of Eleazar, son of Aaron) is represented by Gershom. To his 'house' Ezra must have belonged (cf. vii. 1—5).

Daniel] represented the line or family of Ithamar, Aaron's younger son, and gave his name to a house (see Neh. x. 6). His name appears as Gamael in 1 Esd. viii. 29. From this mention of "the sons of Ithamar we gather that the priesthood was not, as Ezekiel required (xliii. 19, xlv. 15) limited to the line of Zadok.

That Gershom and Daniel were not the only two priests, but heads of two 'fathers' houses', is shown by ver. 24.

of the sons of David; Hattush] According to 1 Chron. iii. 22, the words "Of the sons of Shechaniah" (ver. 3) belong to the genealogy of Hattush. "And the sons of Shechaniah (query, Zerubbabel's grandson); Shemaiah: and the sons of Shemaiah; Hattush and Igal." Hattush was therefore the grandson of Shechaniah, and (?) the great-great-grandson of Zerubbabel. The line of David was represented by the house of Shechaniah, which was represented by Hattush.

1 Esd. viii. 29 has "Of the sons of David, Lettus the son of Sechenias", which in conjunction with the rest of the list seems to show that our text should run "Of the sons of David, Hattush, the son of Shechaniah". This Hattush of the lineage of David must therefore not

of the sons of Pharosh; Zechariah: and with him were reckoned by genealogy of the males an hundred and fifty.

be confounded with the priest of the same name mentioned Neh. x. 4, xii. 2.

3—14. The register of the laity or "the men of the people of Israel" as in ii. 2.

The names of these houses with the exception of Shechaniah (ver. 5) and Shelomith (ver. 10) appear also in chap. ii. and Neh. vii. But it is most probable that the text has in the case of both these exceptions suffered (see notes on the verses), and that the houses of Zattu and Bani (Ezra ii. 8, 10) are represented by Shechaniah and Shelomith.

Twelve households are represented by their chiefs and the number of their males given. The number 'twelve' was perhaps designedly taken to symbolize the united Israel.

The parallel list in 1 Esdras does not contain many variations. The following table places them side by side.

Ezra		1 *Esdras* viii. 30 ff.	
Of the sons of			
,, Parosh, Zechariah,	150		
,, Pahath-Moab, Eliehoenai, the son of Zerahiah,	200		
,, Shechaniah, the son of Jahaziel,	300	Of the sons of Zathoe, Sechenias, the son of Jezelus,	300
,, Adin, Ebed, the son of Jonathan,	50	,, Adin, Obeth, the son of Jonathan,	250
,, Elam, Jeshaiah, the son of Athalian,	70	,, Elam, Josias, the son of Gotholias	70
,, Shephatiah, Zebadiah, the son of Michael,	80	,, Saphatias, Zaraias, son of Michael,	70
,, Joab, Obadiah, the son of Jehiel,	218	,, Joab, Abadias, the son of Jezelus,	212
,, Shelomith, the son of Josiphiah,	160	,, Banid, Assalimoth, the son of Josaphias,	160
,, Bebai, Zechariah, the son of Bebai,	28	,, Astath, Johannes, the son of Acatan,	110
,, Azgad, Jonathan, the son of Hakkatan,	110		
,, Adonikam, Eliphelet, Jeuel, Shemaiah,	60	,, Adonicam the last, ...Eliphalet, Jeuel and Samaias,	70
,, Bigvai, Uthai and Zabbud,	70	,, Bago, Uthi, the son of Istalcurus,	70

Of the sons of Pahath-Moab; Elihoenai the son of Zerahiah, 4
and with him two hundred males. Of the sons of Shecha- 5
niah; the son of Jahaziel, and with him three hundred
males. Of the sons also of Adin; Ebed the son of Jo- 6
nathan, and with him fifty males. And of the sons of 7
Elam; Jeshaiah the son of Athaliah, and with him seventy
males. And of the sons of Shephatiah; Zebadiah the son 8
of Michael, and with him fourscore males. Of the sons of 9
Joab; Obadiah the son of Jehiel, and with him two hun-
dred and eighteen males. And of the sons of Shelomith; 10
the son of Josiphiah, and with him an hundred and three-
score males. And of the sons of Bebai; Zechariah the 11
son of Bebai, and with him twenty and eight males. And 12
of the sons of Azgad; Johanan the son of Hakkatan, and
with him an hundred and ten males. And of the last sons 13

The total numbers given in the Hebrew text are 1496, in 1 Esdr. 1690.

3. This verse should begin with 'of the sons of Parosh' (see note on ver. 2).

'by genealogy of the males'. The present list differs in this respect from that recorded in chap. ii. There the total numbers are given; here the number of the males only.

4. *Elihoenai*] R.V. **Eliehoenai**, literally, 'unto Jehovah mine eyes'.

5. The Hebrew text gives Shechaniah as the house, but fails to give the name of its representative. 'Shecaniah' does not occur in the other lists as the name of a house. The text of 1 Esdr. has 'of the sons of Zathoe, Shechenias the son of Jezelus' (1 Esdr. viii. 32). 'Zathoe' is the same as Zattu (ii. 8). This name has most probably accidentally dropped out. We should therefore read "Of the sons of Zattu, Shechaniah the son of Jahaziel', i.e. Shechaniah is the representative of the house of Zattu: so also the LXX. (*ἀπὸ υἱῶν Ζαθόης Σεχενίας υἱὸς Ἀζιήλ*).

6. The Hebrew text and the LXX. give 50: 1 Esdras gives 250. The smaller number is probably the original.

10. Here, as in ver. 5, the name of the representative is not given, while the name of the house Shelomith does not occur in the other lists.

1 Esdras viii. 36 gives "Of the sons of Banid, Assalimoth son of Josaphias", which is here supported by the LXX. (*ἀπὸ τῶν υἱῶν Βαανί, Σελιμοὺθ υἱὸς Ἰωσεφία*). This shows the original reading to have been in all probability "of the sons of Bani (cf. ii. 10) Shelomith the son of Josiphiah".

13. *of the last sons of Adonikam, whose names* are *these*] R.V. **Of the sons of Adonikam, that were the last; and these are their names.**

of Adonikam, whose names *are* these, Eliphelet, Jeiel, and
14 Shemaiah, and with them threescore males. Of the sons
also of Bigvai; Uthai, and Zabbud, and with them seventy
males.
15 And I gathered them together to the river that runneth

'The sons of Adonikam, that were the last'. (Acheronim) is a peculiar expression. It is generally supposed that the elder branches of this house had joined with Zerubbabel (ii. 13) and that the *younger* branches ('the last') returned with Ezra.

Others have supposed that the sons of Adonikam attached themselves 'late', last of all, to Ezra's company.

It is noteworthy that this 'household', is represented not by one name, but by three. Perhaps we have here the names of three families, Eliphelet, Jeuel and Shemaiah, who had but recently attached themselves to the Adonikam 'house'. It may be conjectured that these 'last' sons of Adonikam had not yet become sufficiently united to have a single representative.

14. The house of Bigvai is represented by two names, though the parallel passage of 1 Esdr. viii. 40 gives but one, i.e. Uthi the son of Istalcurus.

Zabbud] R.V. marg. Another reading is *Zaccur*. The variation illustrates the liability to confusion, in the MSS., between ב and כ (*bêth*=b and *caph*=*c*), and ד and ר (*dāleth*=d and *rêsh*=r).

(*b*) 15—20. The Encampment of Ahava; the Absence of Levites.

15. The Rendezvous.

15. *the river that runneth to Ahava*] 'Ahava' is here the name of a place, which seems to have also given its name to the river. Ewald conjectured that the river Ahava (or Peleg-Ahava) was to be identified with the Palacopas, which flowed S. of Babylon. Rawlinson identifies with the river Is mentioned by Herodotus (i. 179) flowing from the E. into the Euphrates at a point, where stood a town of the same name (the modern Hit), an eight days' journey distant from Babylon. He points out that a well-known town upon the line of march would be a likely spot for a halting-place.

We do not however gather from the verse that Ezra's march had actually begun. The rendezvous at Ahava enabled Ezra to make the necessary preliminary review of his large company. It is hardly likely that this first review would be held at a great distance from Babylon, where the great majority of the Jews were settled. On the other hand it is equally unlikely that a gathering of 1500 men and of a caravan which must have comprised 7000 or 8000 souls would have met within the walls of Babylon.

The conjecture therefore that the Ahava was one of the many canals or artificial rivers in the vicinity of Babylon, appears to be the most probable. Perhaps there was a specially influential settlement of Jews

to Ahava; and there abode we in tents three days: and I viewed the people, and the priests, and found there none of the sons of Levi. Then sent I for Eliezer, 16

on the banks of the Ahava, as there had been once on the banks of the Chebar (cf. Ezek. i. 1 &c.). For purposes of lustration the pious Jews may have met with special frequency by the banks of rivers (cf. the proseuchæ and synagogues of later times), "By the rivers of Babylon," (Ps. cxxxvii. 1). See Acts xvi. 13.

1 Esdras viii. 41 renders by 'a river called Theras' (ἐπὶ τὸν λεγόμενον Θερὰν πόταμον). The LXX. gives πρὸς τὸν Εὐί (ver. 21 Ἀουέ).

abode we in tents] R.V. **we encamped.** The three days' encampment preceded the final move. The short interval was employed by Ezra in securing the services of Levites. As the camp was struck and the march begun on the 12th day (see ver. 31), the encampment lasted from the 9th to the 12th. Ezra's preparations were begun on the 1st day (see vii. 9 and note).

I viewed] i.e. gave attention to. The same word occurs in Neh. xiii. 7, "I came to Jerusalem and *understood of* the evil." Cf. Prov. vii. 7, "I *discerned* among the youths". Job xlii. 3; Dan. xii. 8.

the people, and the priests] i.e. the laity (cf. ii. 2), and the priests.

and found there none of the sons of Levi] On the occasion of Zerubbabel's journey from Babylon, only seventy-four Levites accompanied him, although over four thousand priests returned (cf. ii. 36, &c.). The backwardness of the Levites to join in the return to the Temple-worship is probably to be explained by their having been especially concerned in (*a*) the worship at the high places, (*b*) the idolatrous forms of worship, which the reformation of Josiah had sought to abolish. See Introduction § 7. iv. C.

16. *Then sent I for Eliezer*, &c.] "*For*". (*a*) The preposition in the original is sometimes found as the sign of the object: thus 2 Chron. xvii. 7, A.V., "he sent *to* his princes, even to Ben-hail", R.V. "he sent his princes, *even* Benhail", &c. This is the alternative rendering ("then sent I Eliezer") of the Vulgate (misi Eliezer et Ariel et Semejam, &c.) and the Syriac, and gives the most natural sense. Ver. 16 then gives the general fact, ver. 17 the details of the mission. (*b*) The rendering of the A.V., R.V. and LXX. (ἀπέστειλα τῷ Ἐλεάζαρ) is quite literal: ver. 16 then contains Ezra's summons to these leading men: ver. 17 the mission, with which he empowers them, upon their coming into his presence. Of these two renderings the first seems to give the better sense. It hardly seems suited to the context to mention that Ezra, who commanded the whole assembly, summoned to his presence certain leading men before sending them upon an important mission. On the other hand it was quite in keeping with Ezra's position to despatch such men upon his errand at once; and while the first verse (ver. 16) records the fact of the message and the names of the leading men, whom he sends, the second verse (ver. 17) describes the object and purpose of the mission. The peculiar usage of the preposition is quite in character with the style of the Hebrew in the books. The probability

for Ariel, for Shemaiah, and for Elnathan, and for Jarib, and for Elnathan, and for Nathan, and for Zechariah, and for Meshullam, chief *men;* also for Joiarib, and
17 for Elnathan, *men* of understanding. And I sent them with commandment unto Iddo the chief at the place

that this is the correct rendering is increased by the variation in the reading of ver. 17 (see note).

chief men] Literally 'heads': not 'the heads' referred to in ver. 1, but certain leaders.

men *of understanding*] R.V. **which were teachers.** Marg. *which had understanding.* The word in the original occurs in Neh. viii. 7 (R.V. 'caused...to understand'); 1 Chron. xv. 22, xxv. 7 (R.V. 'skilful'); 2 Chron. xxxiv. 12 (R.V. 'that...could skill of').

Joiarib and Elnathan receive a distinguishing epithet corresponding to the 'chief men' applied to the other names. It is not probable that a merely general epithet describing mental capacity should be given to two out of the party of ten. The word therefore is better rendered "teachers", describing their position, than 'men of understanding', describing their abilities (LXX. συνιέντας, Vulg. sapientes).

17. *And I sent them with commandment*] R.V. **And I sent them forth.** Marg. another reading is *I gave them commandment.* The A.V. combines the two readings.

The variety of reading arises from the uncertainty felt as to the true rendering of the previous verse. The rendering 'then sent I for' in that verse requires in this verse the reading 'And I sent them forth' (C'thib). The rendering 'then sent I' could be followed by either 'I sent them forth' or 'I gave them commandment' (K'ri), the latter being less a repetition of the previous sentence.

Supposing that "I gave them commandment" was the original reading, we can see that, when the Hebrew idiom in ver. 16 'then sent I' (the object expressed by a preposition) dropped out of sight and the literal translation seemed to be "then sent I for", a reason was given for the very slight alteration, by which "I gave them commandment" was altered to "I sent them forth" (LXX. ἐξήνεγκα). This accounts for the existence of the two readings, and for the prevalence of that accepted in the R.V. text. But the R.V. margin seems preferable. It gives a natural sense and agrees well with what precedes and follows. On the other hand the alternative reading "I sent them forth" represents a word of great frequency in the sense of 'bring forth or out' (e.g. i. 7, x. 3, 19; Neh. ix. 7, 15): it denotes 'deliverance', 'dismissal', 'removal', 'utterance': but is not at all suited to the description of the mission. It occurs very often in the O.T., but it may be questioned whether it is ever elsewhere rendered "send forth".

unto Iddo the chief at the place Casiphia] Lit. 'Iddo the head'. Iddo clearly exercised some position of authority over the Jews, and particularly over the Levites and Nethinim settled at Casiphia. We may conjecture that Iddo was a Levite presiding over a college of young

Casiphia, and I told them what they should say unto Iddo, *and to* his brethren the Nethinims, at the place Casiphia, that *they* should bring unto us ministers for the house of our God. And by the good hand of our God upon us they 18
brought us a man of understanding, of the sons of Mahli,

Levites and Nethinim, and who might be ready to send young men to Ezra's aid.

Casiphia] which some of the older commentators used to identify with the 'Caspian', was probably some village in the neighbourhood of Babylon. The LXX. rendered the word from the similarity of the first part of the word to the Hebrew 'ceseph' (silver), ἐν ἀργυρίῳ τοῦ τόπου.

and I told them what they should say] Lit. 'And I put words in their mouth to speak'. The general charge comprised verbatim instructions. On the phrase "put words...in mouth", cf. Ex. iv. 15; Num. xxiii. 16; Deut. xxxi. 19.

unto Iddo, and to *his brethren the Nethinims*] R.V. **unto Iddo** *and* **his brethren the Nethinim.** Marg. 'The text as pointed has, *Iddo, his brother.*' The text is here corrupt. The uncertainty as to Iddo's position, and the unlikelihood that a man of such influence would have been one of the Nethinim, has increased the doubtfulness of the true reading. (*a*) Adopting the pointed text, and supposing the letter Vaw (=and) to be accidentally dropped after the name of Iddo which ends with that letter, we could render 'unto Iddo *and his brother*, the Nethinim'. (*b*) Altering the vowel-points and assuming the omission of the same letter, we obtain the rendering of the A.V. and R.V. "unto Iddo *and his brethren* the Nethinim" (cf. iii. 2, Jeshua and his brethren the priests). (*c*) Supposing a second similar omission to have taken place, we have "unto Iddo and his brethren (i.e. Levites) and the Nethinim".

Of these alternative renderings (*c*) appears to be the most probable. The appeal is made to Iddo and to his brethren the Levites. As the response (18—20) comes from Levites and Nethinim, we conclude that Iddo presided over the Nethinim as well as over the Levites. Just as a High-priest himself a priest, would preside over priests and Levites, so Iddo himself a Levite would preside over Levites and Nethinim. The Nethinim may have been more numerous and influential than the Levites. At any rate it is not likely that Iddo himself belonged to this inferior class.

ministers] A very general word in the original, to include Levites and Nethinim. Cf. 1 Sam. ii. 11. The LXX., misreading a letter, renders "singers" (ᾄδοντας).

18. *And by the good hand*] R.V. **And according to the good hand.** For the phrase see on chap. vii. 6.

a man of understanding] R.V. **a man of discretion.** Marg. Or *Ish-sechel.* Discretion (*sechel*). Cf. 1 Chr. xxii. 12; 2 Chr. ii. 12; Prov. xix. 11: =understanding, Prov. iii. 4, xiii. 15, xvi. 22; Ps. cxi. 10: =wisdom Prov. xii. 8; xxiii. 9: =policy Dan. viii. 25. The fact that we find in the following clause "And Sherebiah", &c. favours the

the son of Levi, the son of Israel; and Sherebiah, with his
19 sons and his brethren, eighteen; and Hashabiah, and with
him Jeshaiah of the sons of Merari, his brethren and their
20 sons, twenty; also of the Nethinims, whom David and the
princes had appointed for the service of the Levites, two
hundred and twenty Nethinims: all of them were expressed
21 by name. Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river

supposition that we ought to have the name of the individual mentioned who was "of the sons of Mahli". Either, as is most probable, this proper name has dropped out of the text before the words "a man of discretion", or as is possible 'Ish-sechel' (LXX. *ἀνὴρ Σαχὼν*) is a proper name (cf. Ishbosheth, Ish-tob, 2 Sam. x. 6; Ish-hod, 1 Chr. vii. 18). But such names are rare, and the name Ish-sechel does not occur elsewhere. The view that the 'and' before Sherebiah has been carelessly inserted, and that Sherebiah himself is the man of discretion, fails to account for the order of the Hebrew words.

Mahli, the son of Levi, &c.] Cf. Ex. vi. 16, 19; 1 Chron. vi. 19. Mahli was son of Merari, and therefore a grandson of Levi.

Sherebiah] Cf. ver. 24; Neh. viii. 7, ix. 4, x. 12, xii. 24.

19. *Hashabiah*] see ver. 24; Neh. x. 11, xii. 24.

20. *also of the Nethinims*] R.V. **and of the Nethinim.**

whom David and the princes had appointed] R.V. **whom David and the princes had given.** 'Given', not 'appointed', more literal rendering and corresponds with meaning of Nethinim (=given). See on ii. 55. The sentence illustrates the prevailing tradition as to the origin of the Nethinim.

for the service of] here as usually="for ministration or service to"; cf. Ex. xxx. 16: frequent in Chron. in the phrase "the service of the house of God". Sometimes="service rendered by", e.g. Ex. xxxviii. 21. For its primary meaning cf. Neh. v. 18 (bondage).

all...expressed by name] cf. the same phrase 1 Chron. xii. 31, xvi. 41; 2 Chron. xxviii. 15, xxxi. 19. The metaphor of the original is that of being 'pricked' off on the list. The list was probably before the compiler, who does not think it worth while to occupy space with the names.

21—36. The Events of the Journey.

21—30. Preparations for the journey. (*a*) 21—23. The rendezvous and solemn fast at Ahava.

21. *I proclaimed a fast*] For "fasting" see also on ix. 3, x. 6. Here however the fast is not proclaimed in connexion with any special commission of sin. Ezra appoints the fast (*a*) as the symbol of submission before God's will and of repentance from sin, (*b*) as the means of intensifying religious fervour in prayer through the restraint laid upon physical appetite, (*c*) as the testimony that 'man lives not by bread alone'.

Viewed in this aspect, the public fast proclaimed by Ezra was a

Ahava, that *we* might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance. For I was ashamed to require of the 22
king a band *of soldiers* and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God *is* upon all them for good that

spiritual exercise; from which the pagan notion of propitiating God's favour by voluntary human suffering was altogether absent. Cf. 2 Chron. xx. 3.

Compare the fast of Judas Maccabeus and his companions (1 Macc. iii. 47) before they addressed themselves to the conflict with the forces of Antiochus Epiphanes.

that we *might afflict ourselves*] R.V. **that we might humble ourselves.** A moral not a physical discipline. The self-affliction or humiliation is expressed by a verb which gave rise to the regular word in later Hebrew for fasting, "Taanith".

a right way] R.V. **a straight way.** Both a direct road, that they might not have to turn aside on account of attacks and dangers from robbers or enemies, and a level road without obstacles and inequalities. Cf. Is. xl. 3, 'make *straight* (or *level*) in the desert a high way for our God'; where the same word occurs.

our substance] same word as is rendered 'goods' in ch. i. 6 (see note).

22. *I was ashamed*] same word as in ix. 6 'I am ashamed', Jer. xxxi. 19 'I was ashamed'.

to require] R.V. **to ask.** The simplest rendering for the commonest word.

a band of soldiers *and horsemen*] Such an escort as Nehemiah had, Neh. ii. 9, 'Now the king had sent with me captains of the army and horsemen'.

a band of soldiers] This word is rendered *δύναμιν* by the LXX. and 'auxilium' by the Vulgate. It is the word rendered 'army' in the passage just quoted (Neh. ii. 9) and in Neh. iv. 2; it is a word of frequent occurrence, e.g. 2 Kings vi. 14, 'horses, and chariots, and a great *host*'. Here it simply means 'armed men'.

against the enemy in the way] against 'the enemy' generally. No enemy in particular, Samaritan (iv. 1) or Syrian, is contemplated. Rather the reference is to the robbers and Bedouins of the desert, who might easily inflict damage upon a large caravan by robbing stragglers and harassing the line of march.

The hand of God] cf. on vii. 6.

upon all them for good that seek him] R.V. **upon all them that seek him, for good.** The word rendered 'seek' here (biqqêsh) differs from that rendered by the same English word in iv. 2, vi. 21, vii. 10 (dârash). Both words occur in the same verse in Deut. iv. 29, 'But if from thence ye shall seek (biqqêsh) the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him if thou search after (dârash) him with all thy heart and all thy soul'. This word

seek him; but his power and his wrath *is* against all them
23 that forsake him. So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us.
24 Then I separated twelve of the chief of the priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them,

(biqqêsh) is the commonest, denoting 'to look for', e.g. ii. 62; Gen. xxxvii. 16; Ps. xxiv. 6.

for good] cf. vii. 9; Neh. ii. 18.

his power and his wrath] cf. the same two words in Ps. xc. 11, 'who knoweth the power of thine anger', i.e. His might revealed in displeasure.

against all them that forsake him] as if Ezra and his companions, if they had relied on the protection of an armed escort rather than of their God, would have 'forsaken' Him. A common expression (cf. 1 Sam. xii. 10; Is. lxv. 11; 2 Chron. vii. 22, xii. 5, xiii. 11, xxi. 10, xxiv. 20, 24) for religious faithlessness.

23. *for this*] either prayed for this favour, or as in ix. 15, 'because of this', i.e. on the ground of this mingled faith and self-abasement.

and he was intreated of us] This phrase occurs also in Gen. xxv. 21; 2 Sam. xxi. 14, xxiv. 25; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 13.

24—30. (*b*) PROVISION FOR THE CUSTODY OF THE VOTIVE GIFTS AND OFFERINGS DURING THE MARCH.

24. *twelve of the chief of the priests*] R.V. **twelve of the chiefs of the priests.** Literally 'twelve of the princes of the priests'. The R.V. margin adds, In Neh. xii. 24, *Levites.*

Sherebiah, Hashabiah] R.V. **even Sherebiah, Hashabiah.** Marg. *besides.* The exact meaning is not very evident.

(*a*) The A.V. follows the Vulgate, "et separavi de principibus sacerdotum duodecim, Sarabiam et Hasabiam et cum eis de fratribus eorum decem". The preposition which in the original stands before 'Sherebiah' is then treated (as in ver. 16) as the sign of the object. The objection to this is that Sherebiah and Hashabiah seem to have been Levites.

(*b*) The LXX. translates the preposition as the sign of the dative, 'And I assigned of the chiefs of the priests twelve unto Sherebiah, &c." (καὶ διέστειλα...τῷ Σαραΐᾳ). The objection to be made to this rendering is that it represents the priests as placed in a subordinate position to those who were Levites.

(*c*) 1 Esd. viii. 54 and Eresibia (καὶ Ἐρεσιβίαν) suggests another reading (ו for ל), "And I separated...twelve and Sherebiah, &c."

(*d*) The same result is obtained by the rendering of the R.V. margin, which is to be preferred, "I separated twelve of the chiefs of the priests, *besides* Sherebiah, Hashabiah and ten of their brethren with them", i.e. 12 priests *in addition to* 12 Levites (Sherebiah, Hashabiah and their 10 brethren). Accepting this rendering, we see that Ezra selected two groups of twelve, one of priests, the other of Levites, to act as guardians of the treasure, which agrees with ver. 30. The names of Sherebiah

and weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the 25
vessels, *even* the offering of the house of our God, which the
king, and his counsellers, and his lords, and all Israel
there present, had offered: I even weighed unto their hand 26
six hundred and fifty talents *of* silver, and silver vessels
an hundred talents, *and of* gold an hundred talents; also 27
twenty basons of gold, of a thousand drams; and two

and Hashabiah are for some reason specially mentioned, either being the best known of the twenty-four, or perhaps alone recorded in the chronicle employed by the compiler. The only other explanation possible, that of the R.V. text, is that Sherebiah and Hashabiah were two of 'the chiefs of the priests' and not to be identified with the Levites of the same name in Neh. xii. 24. This gives a satisfactory meaning, according to which Ezra selected twelve 'chiefs of priests' to act as custodians. But (1) the clause 'and ten of their brethren with them', after the previous mention of the 'twelve', rather denotes a second group of the same number: (2) it is expressly stated in ver. 30, 'the priests *and the Levites* received the weight of the silver, &c.', while according to the R.V. text the Levites were not of the number.

25. *and weighed*] Money was still for the most part reckoned by weight (cf. on vii. 22).

the silver, &c.] The offerings referred to in vii. 15—18, and the vessels given by the king and others vii. 19, 27.

the offering of the house, &c.] R.V. **the offering for the house.** A dedicatory offering (t'rûmah), as is described in Ex. xxxv. 24. Literally 'the offering of', as in Ex. xxx. 15, 'the offering of the LORD', or 'heave offering unto the LORD', Num. xviii. 26, 28, 29, xxxi. 29; 2 Chr. xxxi. 14, 'the oblations of the LORD'. Here 'the offering of', i.e. 'belonging to the house' is equivalent to 'the offering for the house.' The expression does not occur again.

his counsellers] cf. on vii. 14.

his lords] R.V. **his princes**; as in vii. 28.

and all Israel there *present*] Literally 'and all Israel that were found'. A peculiar phrase, occurring also in 1 Chron. xxix. 17, 'thy people *which are present here*' (lit. that are found here); 2 Chron. v. 11, 'all the priests *that were present*' (lit. that were found).

26. *unto their hand*] R.V. **into their hand.** Cf. note on i. 8.

The enormous value of these gifts is startling. The suspicion that the figures have been exaggerated by copyists is not unnatural.

six hundred and fifty talents of *silver*] A talent of silver being reckoned as worth £375, this means a sum approaching to a quarter of a million sterling, £243,750.

silver vessels an hundred talents] i.e. worth a 100 talents = £37,500.

and of *gold an hundred talents*] R.V. omits 'and'. A gold talent was worth about £6,750; 100 talents would then = £675,000.

27. *also twenty basons of gold*] R.V. **and twenty bowls of gold**: 'bowl' as in i. 10.

28 vessels of fine copper, precious as gold. And I said unto
them, Ye *are* holy unto the LORD; the vessels *are* holy
also; and the silver and the gold *are* a freewill offering unto
29 the LORD God of your fathers. Watch ye, and keep *them*,
until ye weigh *them* before the chief of the priests and the
Levites, and chief of the fathers of Israel, at Jerusalem,
30 *in* the chambers of the house of the LORD. So took the

of a thousand drams] R.V. **of a thousand darics.** About £1 each: see on ii. 69.

The total specified values then are about

£243,750 + £37,500 + £675,000 + £1,000 = £957,250,

or nearly a million of our money.

fine copper] R.V. **fine bright brass.** The Hebrew word (Muçhâbh) occurs only here. LXX. στίλβοντος. Some have suggested 'orichalchum', a variety of brass.

1 Esdras viii. 57, 'And twelve (not 'two') vessels of brass even of fine brass, glittering like gold'.

precious] a rare word in the Hebrew, occurring also in Gen. xxvii. 15, '*goodly* raiment'; 2 Chr. xx. 25; Dan. xi. 38, 43, 'precious things' (cf. Dan. x. 3, 'pleasant bread' or bread of preciousness), applied metaphorically to Daniel himself 'greatly beloved' (lit. a man of precious things), Dan. ix. 23, x. 11, 19.

28. *Ye* are *holy*] i.e. consecrated to the LORD, as priests and Levites. Their sanctity not lessened by life in exile.

the vessels are *holy also*] R.V. **and the vessels are holy**, being votive offerings.

unto the LORD God of your fathers] R.V. **unto the LORD, the God of your fathers.** Cf. note on vii. 28. The appeal to their hereditary sanctity and to their special vocation recalls to memory the covenant of Jehovah with the Israelites. Cf. Ex. xix. 5, 6.

29. *Watch ye*] A word denoting vigilance and wakefulness (LXX. ἀγρυπνεῖτε): cf. Ps. cxxvii. 1, 'The watchman *waketh* but in vain': generally metaphorically Ps. cii. 7, 'I watch and am become like a sparrow'. Cf. Jer. i. 12, v. 6.

the chief of the priests] R.V. **the chiefs of the priests.** See note on ver. 24.

and chief of the fathers of Israel] R.V. **and the princes of the fathers' houses in Israel.** In i. 5, iii. 12 we have 'heads of the fathers' houses'. Possibly the word 'sarê' (princes) is here an error for 'rashe' (heads).

in *the chambers*, &c.] Such chambers are described in 1 Kings vi. 5; 1 Chr. xxviii. 12. They served as store-rooms and as places of meeting for the priests. The chambers here referred to probably belonged to the outer buildings of the Temple. Cf. 1 Chron. xxiii. 28; Jer. xxxv. 2, xxxvi. 10; Neh. x. 39, xiii. 4, 7—9.

30. *So took the priests and the Levites*] R.V. **So the priests and the Levites received.** This expression goes to prove that the body of men to whom Ezra entrusted the precious things consisted of two groups of twelve, the one priests the other Levites (see on ver. 24).

priests and the Levites the weight of the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, to bring *them* to Jerusalem unto the house of our God.

Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth 31
day of the first month, to go *unto* Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way. And 32
we came *to* Jerusalem, and abode there three days. Now 33
on the fourth day was the silver and the gold and the vessels weighed in the house of our God by the hand of

31—36. The Journey and the Arrival at Jerusalem.

31. *from the river of Ahava*] See note on ver. 15. Here 'the river of Ahava' translates the Hebrew accurately as 'the river Ahava' does in ver. 21. Vulg. 'a flumine Ahava'.

on the twelfth day *of the first month*] Compare with this date the statements in chap. vii. 8, 9, viii. 15. The encampment at Ahava lasted *three* days (viii. 15). The arrival at Ahava was therefore on the ninth day of the month. Supposing that Ahava is the same as Is (cf. ver. 15), those nine days would have been consumed in the march from Babylon, and the march would have actually begun on the first of the month, vii. 9.

Preferring another explanation of chap. vii. 9, and regarding the encampment at Ahava as a preliminary muster of the whole company made at a convenient spot not far from Babylon, we consider the actual march did not begin till 'the twelfth day of the first month' (Nisan).

the hand, &c.] Cf. on vii. 6.

the enemy] See note on 22.

and of such as lay in wait by the way] R.V. **and the lier in wait by the way**. This explains more fully who 'the enemy' was. Whether any attack was made we are not told. The deliverance may either imply the repulse of such an attack or the absence of any hostile movement.

32. *And we came* to *Jerusalem*] On the first day of the fifth month (vii. 8). See note on the length of the journey. The size of the caravan, the number of women and children, the stoppages at Jewish settlements on the way to apply for further contributions (in accordance with the king's decree), and to enforce the observance of the Law, the possible encounters with Bedouin tribes, were some among the elements of delay.

three days] A three days' interval to rest after the journey and to prepare plans. Nehemiah waited for the same period, Neh. ii. 11.

33, 34. The Presentation of the Gifts and Offerings.

33. *weighed...by the hand of*] R.V. **weighed...into the hand of.** Marg. *by*. The expression "into the hand" has occurred in ver. 26, and

Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest; and with him *was*
Eleazar the son of Phinehas; and with them *was* Jozabad
the son of Jeshua, and Noadiah the son of Binnui, Levites;
34 by number *and* by weight of every one: and all the weight
35 was written at that time. *Also* the children of those that
had been carried away, which were come out of the cap-
tivity, offered burnt offerings unto the God of Israel, twelve

is probably right both here and in chap. i. 8. Meremoth and his three companions were probably deputed by 'the chiefs of the people' to receive the treasure, upon its being weighed and found to tally with the 'invoice', and to convey it to the sacred treasury. These official receivers, consisting of two priests and two Levites, corresponded with the priestly and Levitical commissioners appointed by Ezra for the transport.

The rendering "by the hand of" supposes that the act of weighing was performed by a special body of four men, two priests and two Levites, appointed by the people.

But the other rendering is more suitable. The names not of those who weighed the treasure, but of those who were deemed worthy to be entrusted with its charge were most likely to be preserved.

Meremoth the son of Uriah] is mentioned also in Neh. iii. 4, 21, xii. 3.

Eleazar, &c.] See Neh. xii. 42.

Jozabad] Perhaps mentioned in x. 23; Neh. viii. 7. 'The son of Jeshua', see on ii. 40.

Noadiah the son of Binnui] The name of Binnui occurs in Neh. x. 10, xii. 8. The first two names are those of priests; the latter two those of Levites.

34. *by number* and *by weight of every one*] R.V. **the whole by number and by weight.** The amount of the silver and gold was tested by weighing. The vessels and gifts were numbered, and their value estimated by weight. This list and valuation would check that which was supplied by Ezra's commissioners (ver. 24).

was written at that time] An exact inventory made at the date and accessible among other state documents.

35. Also *the children of those that had been carried away, which were come out of the captivity*] R.V. **The children of the captivity which were come out of exile.**

By this term is intended Ezra's company which had just returned. The sacrifices offered by them resembled those offered by Zerubbabel and his companions at the dedication of the Temple (vi. 17). (1) They consisted of the same animals, bullocks, rams and lambs; (2) they were offered in the name of the whole people.

For the expression 'the children of the captivity' compare vi. 19, and see note on chap. ii. 1. The 'exile' (sh'bhi) refers to the condition of captivity, the 'captivity' (haggôlah) to the community of exiles.

bullocks for all Israel, ninety and six rams, seventy and seven lambs, twelve he goats *for* a sin offering: all *this was* a burnt offering unto the LORD. And they delivered the 36
king's commissions unto the king's lieutenants, and *to* the governors on *this* side the river: and they furthered the people, and the house of God.

Now when these *things* were done, the princes came to 9

twelve bullocks...twelve he goats] i.e. for the twelve tribes, cf. on vi. 17, 'for all Israel'.

ninety and six rams] i.e. eight for each tribe.

seventy and seven lambs] a magnification of the perfect number (cf. Gen. iv. 24; Matt. xviii. 22).

for *a sin offering*] The twelve he goats as in vi. 17.

all this was *a burnt offering*] i.e. it was completely consumed.

An offering, of thanksgiving for protection in the journey, and of consecration of the new life.

36. *the king's commissions*] i.e. especially those mentioned in vii. 21, 22, 24 which would concern the provincial administration, by requisitioning for supplies and by exemption from taxation.

The word rendered "commissions" occurs elsewhere in the O.T. only in the Aramaic sections, e.g. = 'law' Ezr. vii. 12, 14, 21, 25, 26; Dan. ii. 9, vi. 5, 8, 12; "decree" Dan. ii. 13, 15.

the king's lieutenants] R.V. **the king's satraps.** A Persian word found in Esther iii. 12, viii. 9, ix. 3, and in Dan. iii. 2, 3, 27, vi. 2, 3, 4, 7, 8. In Hebrew it is transliterated as "akhashdarpan".

In the Persian inscriptions 'khshatrapava' occurs frequently as "governor of a district". It is probably the same as our satrap, which is derived from the Greek (*σατράπης*).

The LXX. rendering (*διοικηταῖς*) reminds us of the original extensive area implied by the word 'diocese'.

and to *the governors*] The 'governor' or 'pekhah', cf. Tatnai v. 3, 4 and Zerubbabel vi. 7; Hag. i. 1 &c. (LXX. *ἐπάρχοις*).

The 'satrap' was governor of a province; the 'pekhah' administered the affairs of a petty kingdom or a small district.

on this *side the river*] R.V. **beyond the river.** See note on iv. 10.

and they furthered the people &c.] The word "furthered" is the same in Hebr. as that rendered "help" in i. 4; it conveniently reproduces the 'zeugma' of the Hebrew construction, by which the same verb is used of assistance to the people and of decoration for the Temple.

The LXX. *ἐδόξασαν*, Vulg. elevaverunt, give common but here inappropriate renderings.

The royal decree turned the scale in favour of the Jews. Officials now aided them. Foreign countries ceased to be neutral.

COMMENCEMENT OF THE RELIGIOUS REFORM.

CHAP. IX. 1—4. THE SIN OF THE PEOPLE.

1. *Now when these* things *were done*] Cf. 2 Chron. xxxi. 1. A very indefinite note of time. We have two dates given by which we can conjecture

me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, *doing* according to their abominations, *even* of

the length of the interval that had occurred since the events narrated at the close of the previous chapter. (1) The sacred gifts had been handed over to the care of the priests and Levites on the 4th day of the *fifth* month, ch. vii. 8, viii. 33. (2) The summons for the general assembly, convened to enquire into the people's sin was sent out on the 27th day of the *ninth* month, ch. x. 8, 9.—On the one hand, it is said, not very much time could have elapsed since Ezra's arrival; for otherwise neither the subject of the complaint could have escaped his observation, nor the information have affected him with such astonishment. On the other hand, if, as is likely, the mention of 'these things' refers to the communication of the king's commissions to the neighbouring satraps and governors, Ezra himself may at first have been occupied in these transactions and perhaps have been absent from Jerusalem, attending in person at the courts of the local governors, to claim the Jewish privileges and exemptions. Furthermore Ezra would have made his ground secure with the princes of the people (x. 6), before proceeding to meet the question that had arisen with strong measures.

We therefore conjecture that the report of 'the princes' described in this verse was made about *four* months after the events described in ch. viii. 31—35, and a week or two before the summons of the general assembly.

the princes] the leaders of the people, the chiefs of the fathers' houses. The term does not mean the whole number, but rather representatives of the class. Many princes were implicated in the charge.

came to me] R.V. **drew near unto me**: more literally.

The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites] The three divisions of the Jewish settlement. 'The people, namely Israel' are the laity as distinguished from the priests and Levites. See vi. 16, vii. 13.

have not separated themselves] The explanation is given in ver. 2. Compare also vi. 21, 'all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land'. Idolatry was the inevitable evil attendant upon the mixed marriages with the heathen.

from the people of the lands] R.V. **from the peoples of the lands**—referring especially to the heathen of the neighbouring countries. See note on vi. 21.

doing *according to their abominations*] The phrase 'the abominations of the heathen' (haggôyyim) is very familiar. Deut. xviii. 9: 1 Kings xiv. 24: 2 Kings xvi. 3, xxi. 2: 2 Chron. xxviii. 3, xxxiii. 2, xxxvi. 14. 'The heathen', thus usually found in connexion with this phrase, can hardly differ from 'the peoples of the lands'. Their 'abominations', which primarily referred to the immoralities of their nature worship, are here associated with the mixed marriages, since the foreign wives introduced impure forms of worship among the Israelites. Others render 'in respect of their abominations'.

the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. For they have taken of their daughters for 2
themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of *those* lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this

even *of the Canaanites* &c.] The Hebrew preposition is better here rendered as expressing identification='even', 'namely' &c. than comparison='according to' (the abominations of). The eight nationalities here mentioned exemplify the possibilities of contamination from intercourse with 'the peoples'. They differ therefore from the list of nations whose conquered territory the Israelites were to possess. *Five* in Ex. xiii. 5, Canaanite, Hittite, Amorite, Hivite, Jebusite: *six* are named in Ex. iii. 8; Deut. xx. 17; Josh. ix. 1, xii. 8, Canaanite, Hittite, Amorite, Perizzite, Hivite, Jebusite: *seven* in Deut. vii. 1; Jos. iii. 10, xxiv. 11, Hittite, Girgashite, Amorite, Canaanite, Perizzite, Hivite, Jebusite. Of the seven names occurring in these lists, two i.e. the Hivite and the Girgashite are not here mentioned. Three others are inserted, the Ammonite, the Moabite, and the Egyptian. (In the parallel passage of 1 Esd. viii. 69 'the Ammonites' are omitted, and 'the Edomites' substituted for 'the Amorites'—a change indicating the later date of this composition.) The position of the Ammonites, Moabites and Egyptians between the Jebusites and the Amorites is strange. But the list so far as it refers to contemporaneous influences, is illustrative rather than exhaustive of 'peoples' (*a*) not driven out of Palestine, (*b*) dwelling on the frontier of Israel. It combines typical names, familiar in the lists of the early writings of this people, with those of countries which were the chief source of more recent corruption.

The mention of the Ammonite, Moabite, and Egyptian together suggest the influence of Deut. xxiii. 3—7.

2. *they have taken*] i.e. 'taken wives' as in x. 44; 2 Chron. xi. 21, xiii. 21.

the holy seed] i.e. the race set apart and consecrated to God, cf. Ex. xix. 5, 6. The term 'the holy seed' is found also in Isai. vi. 13.

have mingled themselves] The same phrase occurs in a passage which well illustrates our verse. Ps. cvi. 34, 35. 'They did not destroy the peoples ('ammîm) as the LORD commanded them; but *mingled themselves* with the nations (haggoyyim) and learned their works'.

with the people of those *lands*] R.V. **with the peoples of the lands**, as in ver. 1.

the hand of the princes and rulers] marg. 'princes and *deputies*'. Compare the same phrase Neh. v. 7.

The word rendered 'rulers' (marg. 'deputies') 'segānîm' is of Assyrian origin. It occurs in Is. xli. 25, and preceded by 'pekhah' in Jer. li. 23, 28, 57; Ezek. xxiii. 6, 12, 23 as 'governors and deputies'; in Neh. iv. 14, 19, v. 7, vii. 5, xii. 40, xiii. 11 as 'rulers' (marg. 'deputies').

3 trespass. And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and pluckt off the hair of my head and

'The princes' seem to have been the chief authorities. A ruler or deputy (sagan) held under the governor a post of subordinate responsibility.

chief in this trespass] R.V. marg. *first*. This is probably more correct; the chiefs and rulers had set the example of wrong-doing. 'Trespass' ver. 4, x. 6. Compare the use of this word with reference to national sin, Jos. vii. 1, xxii. 16.

3. *I rent my garment and my mantle*] Ezra's conduct betrays his surprise, his grief, and his indignation. The rending of the clothes is frequently mentioned in Scripture as a sign of grief: Ezra here is described as rending the under-garment or tunic (the 'begedh') and the long loose robe (the m'îl) in which he was attired. Reuben rent his 'clothes' (plur. of 'begedh') on not finding Joseph (Gen. xxxvii. 29): Jacob rent his 'garments' (plur. of 'simlah') on seeing Joseph's blood-stained coat (Gen. xxxvii. 34): Joseph's brethren rent their clothes (plur. of 'simlah') when the cup was found in Benjamin's sack (Gen. xliv. 13): Joshua rent his 'clothes' (plur. of 'simlah') after the repulse at Ai (Jos. vii. 6): Jephthah rent his clothes (plur. of 'begedh') on meeting his daughter (Judg. xi. 35): the messenger from the field of Ziklag came with his clothes (plur. of 'begedh') rent (2 Sam. i. 2, cf. 1 Sam. iv. 12): Job rent his mantle ('m'îl') on hearing of his children's death (Job i. 20), and his friends rent each one his mantle ('m'îl') when they came to visit him (Job ii. 12). These were all signs of grief. The action also denoted 'horror' on receiving intelligence or hearing words, which shocked: thus Hezekiah and his ministers rent their clothes (plur. of 'begedh') after Rabshakeh's speech (2 Kings xviii. 37, xix. 1): Mordecai rent his clothes (plur. of 'begedh') on hearing of Haman's determination (Esth. iv. 1): the High-priest rent his garments on hearing the testimony of Jesus (Matt. xxvi. 65). See also Isai. xxxvi. 22; Jer. xli. 5; 2 Chron. xxxiv. 27.

The 'mantle' was a long flowing robe; by this name is designated the High-priest's robe (Ex. xxviii. 31, 34, xxxix. 22, 23); the 'robe' which Hannah made for Samuel (1 Sam. ii. 19); Jonathan's 'robe', which he presented to David (1 Sam. xviii. 4); Samuel's robe (1 Sam. xv. 27); Saul's 'robe' (1 Sam. xxiv. 4); the 'robe' which covered the apparition of Samuel (1 Sam. xxviii. 14). Its use in metaphor (Ps. cix. 29; Is. lix. 17) agrees with this.

and pluckt off the hair &c.] This sign of grief is not described elsewhere in the O. T. Compare Esther (additions to), xiv. 2, 'All the places of her joy she filled with her torn hair'.

The shaven head was a common sign of mourning, e.g. Job i. 20; Ezek. vii. 18; Amos. viii. 10. Ezra's action denotes in an exaggerated way his great grief.

Nehemiah's indignation made him 'pluck off' the hair of his opponents (Neh. xiii. 25; cf. 2 Esdr. i. 8), but is hardly a parallel case.

of my beard, and sat down astonied. Then were assembled 4
unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God
of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had
been carried away; and I sat astonied until the evening
sacrifice. And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my 5
heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle,

and sat down astonied] cf. Dan. iv. 19 'Then Daniel...was astonied for a while'. The word in the original is the same as that rendered 'desolator' (marg. desolate) in Dan. ix. 27, and 'that maketh desolate' Dan. xi. 31. Here the sense of 'bewilderment' is uppermost. See the use of 'astonied' in the R.V., Job xvii. 8, xviii. 20; Ezek. iv. 17; Dan. iii. 24, iv. 19.

4. There are collected unto Ezra those who believed in the word of God and dreaded the displeasure consequent upon such transgression. Perhaps the reference is especially to the threats contained in the Law. Cf. Deut. vii. 1—4.

every one that trembled at the words &c.] cf. x. 3, 'those that tremble at the commandment of our God'. Isai. lxvi. 2, 'to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word', and ver. 5, 'Hear the word of God, ye that tremble at his word'. The dread of the consequences of disobedience rather than horror at the nature of the offence seems here depicted. But if the nature of sin was not yet realised, the sovereignty of a Higher Law was recognised, and 'sin is lawlessness' (1 John iii. 4).

of those that had been carried away] R.V. **of them of the captivity.** Heb. 'haggôlah', the collective abstract name for those who had shared the captivity.

until the evening sacrifice] R.V. **until the evening oblation.** This is the daily evening *minkhah* or meal offering. See note on Neh. x. 33.

It is here mentioned as a common division of the day, as in 1 Kings xviii. 29. Cf. Judith ix. 1, 'about the time that the incense of that evening was offered in Jerusalem'. Ezra probably spent the greater part of the day in this posture.

5—15. Ezra's Confession.

5. *And at the evening sacrifice*] R.V. **And at the evening oblation,** i.e. at the time of its being offered.

I arose up from my heaviness] R.V. **I arose up from my humiliation.** Marg. *fasting.* The Hebrew word 'Taanith' occurs only here in the O.T.: in later Hebrew it became the accepted for religious fasting. This passage favours the original application to general humiliation rather than to abstinence from food. So the LXX. ταπείνωσις.

and having rent my garment and my mantle] R.V. **even with my garment and my mantle rent; and.** There is no need to render as the A.V. and most commentators, as if Ezra for a second time rent his clothes. He calls attention to the fact that in the presence of

I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the
6 LORD my God, and said,

O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to

the assembled people he stood before them with these evident signs of his grief and dismay, and thus by a mute appeal united them with him in his act of prayer.

fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands] We find in Scripture both kneeling and standing as the postures of prayer. For kneeling compare 1 Kings viii. 54, Solomon...kneeling on his knees with his hands spread forth toward heaven. Dan. vi. 10 'And he kneeled upon his knees three times a day.' Ps. xcv. 6 'Let us kneel before the LORD our Maker'. Cf. Luke xxii. 41; Acts vii. 60, ix. 40, xx. 36, xxi. 5. For standing cf. 1 Sam. i. 26; 1 Kings viii. 22; 1 Chron. xxiii. 30; Matt. vi. 5; Luke xviii. 11.

The attitude of spreading out the hands expressed the desire to receive and to embrace the Divine gift, the hands open and the palms turned upwards as if to accept. Cf. Ex. ix. 29; 1 Kings viii. 22. Isai. i. 15 'And when ye spread forth your hands'. 2 Macc. iii. 20 'All holding their hands toward heaven made supplication'.

the LORD my God] Cf. vii. 6, 9, 14, 19, 20, 25, 26 and especially 28.

6—15. EZRA'S PRAYER.

Ezra's prayer, as a confession of national sin, should be compared with the prayer of the Levites (Neh. ix. 6—38), and more especially with the prayer of Daniel (Dan. ix. 4—19). As in the confession of Daniel, the personality of the speaker is merged in that of the nation. The sin of the race no less than its shame and its punishment is acknowledged in the 'we', 'our', and 'us'. The self-abnegation and love of Ezra as of Moses (Ex. xxxii. 32), and of Paul (Rom. ix. 3), accept the obligations of nationality as the source of guilt as well as of privilege to the individual.

The general plan of the confession resembles that of Daniel. It consists of (1) general confession, ver. 6 (cf. Dan. ix. 4—6), (2) the sins of former time, ver. 7 (Dan. ix. 7, 8); (3) God's mercy and goodness, verses 7, 8 (Dan. ix. 9); (4) Israel's sin in the face of the Divine warning, verses 10—12 (Dan. ix. 10—14); (5) the fresh guilt and final appeal, verses 13—15 (Dan. ix. 15—19).

6. A brief exordium: expression of personal shame and national guilt.

I am ashamed and blush] These words occur together frequently as in Jer. xxxi. 19 'I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth'. Is. xlv. 16; Ps. xxxv. 4. Ezra's expression of shame and confusion is the echo of the prophet's words, 'Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel' (Ezek. xxxvi. 32), the very opposite of their spirit, who 'were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush' (Jer. vi. 15, viii. 12).

to lift up my face to thee] The consciousness of sin will not permit the humble supplicant to 'lift up so much as his eyes to heaven' (Luke xviii. 13). The first person singular is here dropped.

thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over *our* head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens. Since the days of our fathers *have* we *been* in a great trespass 7
unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, *and* our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to a spoil, and

for our iniquities are increased over our *head*] The metaphor is drawn from the waters of a flood (cf. Gen. vii. 17, 18). Compare Ps. xxxviii. 4 'For mine iniquities are gone over mine head'.

and our trespass] R.V. **our guiltiness.** The word 'guiltiness' ('ashmah', not 'ma-al' 'trespass' of ver. 1) is used here and in vv. 7, 13, 15, x. 10, 19. It is the state of guilt resulting from sin, e.g. Lev. iv. 3, 'if the anointed priest shall sin so as to bring guilt (ashmah) on the people'; vi. 5, 7. 2 Chron. xxviii. 13 'For ye purpose that which will bring upon us a *trespass* (marg. 'guilt', Hebr. 'ashmah') against the LORD, to add unto our sins and to our *trespass;* for our *trespass* is great', xxiv. 18, xxviii. 10, xxxiii. 23. Amos viii. 14 'Swear by the sin (ashmah) of Samaria'. Ps. lxix. 5 'My sins (marg. Heb. guiltinesses) are not hid from thee'.

is grown up unto the heavens] Compare the same metaphor applied to 'rage', 2 Chron. xxviii. 9 'In a rage which hath reached up unto heaven'. Either, which is most probable, hyperbolically of magnitude, as of the tower of Babel, 'whose top may reach unto heaven' (Gen. xi. 4), cities walled up to heaven (Deut. i. 28), the judgement of Babylon (Jer. li. 9), or metaphorically, as if the magnitude of the guilt had forced itself upon the notice of God like the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. xviii. 20. 21).

7. The record of Israelite history, i.e. sin and its retribution. But for their sin, the Israelites would have had a far different history.

Since the days of our fathers] The exact phrase hardly occurs elsewhere except Mal. iii. 7 'From the days of your fathers ye have turned aside from mine ordinances'. The context there seems to show that, though the expression is purposely indefinite, it points back to the time when the Law was first given, and is equivalent to saying 'from the first beginnings of the Israelite people'.

have *we* been *in a great trespass*] R.V. **we have been exceedingly guilty.** Marg. Heb. *in great guiltiness.* See note on ver. 6.

we, our kings, and *our priests*] i.e. the nation, with its civil and sacred chiefs. Cf. the fuller category Neh. ix. 32 'Our kings...our princes...our priests...our prophets...our fathers'.

the kings of the lands] With special reference to 'the kings of Assyria' (Neh. ix. 32) and Babylon.

sword...captivity...spoil (R.V. **spoiling**)...*confusion of face*] Life, freedom, property, honour: items of the penalty. 'Confusion of face', lit. shame of face, i.e. dishonour. Cf. Dan. ix. 7, 8 'Unto us confusion of face, as it is this day', 'To us belongeth confusion of face'.

8 to confusion of face, as *it is* this day. And now for a little space grace hath been *shewed* from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give

2 Chron. xxxii. 21 'So he returned with shame of face'. 'Spoiling': a late Hebrew word, occurring also in Esth. ix. 10, 15, 16; Dan. xi. 24, 33; 2 Chron. xiv. 14, xxv. 13, xxviii. 14.

as it is *this day*] cf. ver. 15; Neh. ix. 10; Deut. vi. 24; Jer. xliv. 22.

8. The period since the decree of Cyrus a divinely appointed respite of probation.

And now for a little space] R.V. **And now for a little moment.** 'For a little moment', as in Isai. xxvi. 20 'Hide thyself for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast'. Ezra means that as compared with the long periods of Israel's disobedience (ver. 7), and Israel's punishment, the interval of eighty years since Zerubbabel's return was but a short chapter in the people's history.

grace] The word in the Hebrew is practically always elsewhere in the O.T. rendered 'supplication' (e.g. 1 Kings viii. 30, 38, 52, ix. 3; Ps. vi. 9, lv. 1, cxix. 170; Jer. xxxvi. 7, xxxvii. 20, xxxviii. 26, xlii. 9; Dan. ix. 20; 2 Chron. vi. 19, 29, 35, 39, xxxiii. 13). The only possible exception is Jos. xi. 20 'That they might utterly destroy them, that they might have no *favour*' (marg. Or, *might not sue for favour*). Here the word clearly means the favour or grace, for which the supplication is made.

to leave us a remnant to escape] A remnant to escape (p'lêtah) (1) from the destruction of Jerusalem, as in Ezek. xiv. 22 'Yet, behold, therein shall be left a *remnant* that shall be carried forth', (2) from the evils and degenerating influences of the captivity, as in Neh. i. 3 'I asked them concerning the Jews *that had escaped*, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem'.

and to give us a nail in his holy place] R.V. marg. 'See Is. xxii. 23', 'And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place', referring to Eliakim. The writer makes use of a metaphor, which to us is a little obscure. The passage from Isaiah gives us the image of a nail or peg firmly fastened into a wall so that vessels could be hung from it securely. Others have derived the metaphor from camp life: upon the peg being driven into a firm soil depended the security of the tent. Cf. Is. liv. 2 'lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes' (or nails). In either case the nail is that which holds up or supports. Its power to do so, however strong the nail may be itself, depends upon the firmness of that into which it is driven.—'The nail' here is neither the Temple, as some have supposed, nor the princes and priests, but the community returned from Babylon established at Jerusalem. Upon this community depended the whole hopes of Israel. Ezra acknowledges the mercy which has permitted 'the nail' of the new Israel to be fixed once more in the place which God had chosen.

in his holy place] i.e. in Jerusalem, and at his Temple. The phrase occurs again in Ps. xxiv. 3 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD?

us a little reviving in our bondage. For we *were* bondmen; 9
yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath
extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia,
to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to
repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in
Judah and in Jerusalem. And now, O our God, what 10

and who shall stand in his holy place'? cf. Isai. lx. 13. That 'holy place' was the centre of the nation's life, the witness to the Divine Presence. 'The nail' fixed there should bear any weight and resist all pressure; it was 'the place of the name of the LORD of hosts, the mount Zion' (Is. xviii. 7), 'the place which the LORD shall choose' (Deut. xii. 14 passim), cf. 'the holy mountain of my God' Dan. ix. 20 (16, 24), 'the holy city' Matt. iv. 5, xxvii. 53.

that our God may lighten our eyes] The period of punishment had been one of night and gloom. The new gracious period of respite had brought daylight and brightness, cf. Ps. xiii. 3 'Lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death'.

and give us a little reviving in our bondage] The restoration of the Jews had been a renewal of life (cf. Ezek. xxxii. 1—14) out of death. Ezra says 'a little'; for (1) the period had been short, (2) they were still subject to foreign rulers. But it was a rekindling of the vital spark —a reviving. The Hebrew word is not very common, comp. Gen. xlv. 5 'God did send me before you to preserve life' (lit. for reviving or the maintenance of life).

9. *For we* were *bondmen*] R.V. **For we are bondmen.** Ezra explains his words 'in our bondage'. The bondage is not past. The Jews are still bondmen, in servitude to the king of Persia.

yet our God, &c.] The hand of God's mercy could be discerned in the events of past history.

extended mercy] Cf. vii. 28.

to give us...to set up...to repair] God, by the kings of Persia, gave the 'reviving'; through their favour the Jews had been able 'to set up' the Temple and 'to repair' its ruins; the royal favour acted as a fence to the Jews against the neighbouring nations.

the desolations] R.V. **the ruins.** Marg. *waste places.* Isai. xliv. 26 'I will raise up the waste places thereof', lxi. 4 'And they shall build the old wastes'. Here where the word is applied to the house and is found in connexion with the 'repair' (lit. 'cause to stand' or 'set up' as in Neh. vi. 1) 'ruins' seems the best English equivalent.

a wall] So also R.V. text. R.V. marg. 'a fence'. The Hebrew word ('gâdêr') is specially used of a fence round a vineyard. It is used by Isaiah 'I will break down the fence thereof' (Is. v. 5) in the celebrated allegory in which Israel is the vineyard. It occurs also in the Psalm (lxxx. 12) 'Why hast thou broken down her fences?', where the same image of the sacred vine is employed. The use of the word here is perhaps an allusion to these well-known passages. It is not a literal 'fence' or 'wall', but 'protection' and 'defence'.

in Judah and in Jerusalem] Cf. ii. 1, iv. 6, v. 1.

shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy command-
11 ments, which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land, *unto* which ye go to possess it, *is* an unclean land with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from

10. A sudden apostrophe. God's mercy has been great; but now, in spite of all, Israel has broken this command: what does she deserve?

And now...after this] It has been very generally supposed that 'after this' means 'after this manifestation of Divine clemency'. But it seems better to suppose that Ezra breaks abruptly off at verse 9. The thought of God's favour in the past makes Ezra mentally compare it with the present position of the Jews. 'And now, at this moment, after this fresh violation of commandment, after this further proof of our guiltiness, what can we say?'

11. The Divine commands which Israel had violated had been conveyed to them expressly by the prophets. The people were without excuse.

commanded by thy servants the prophets] Lit. 'by the hand of'. To command by 'the hand of' occurs often, as in the Heb. of Neh. viii. 14; Lev. viii. 36; Num. xvi. 40, xxxvi. 13; Judg. iii. 4, &c.: cf. 'to speak by the hand of', 2 Kings xvii. 23, xxi. 10, xxiv. 2.

saying] The prophetic word is contained in this and the following verse. There is no passage in the prophets resembling the words here given. It is generally supposed that Ezra is citing from Deut. vii. 1—3, and that the expression 'thy servants the prophets' alludes to Moses. But it must be remembered that 'the law of Moses' in these books is always directly referred to, e.g. Ezra iii. 2, vi. 18, vii. 6; Neh. viii. 1, 14, xiii. 1; 2 Chr. xxiii. 18, xxv. 4, xxx. 16, xxxv. 12. It is better then to regard the passage as a perfectly general statement by Ezra of prophetical teaching upon the subject of intermarriage with foreign nations. Such a statement would naturally reecho the Deuteronomic law, and even repeat words and phrases which, by oral as well as by written tradition, would be familiar. We are forcibly reminded how much of the teaching of the prophets has never come down to us. On the other hand it is no less instructive to observe that the prophetical teaching seems naturally to embody itself in a form, which recalls the language of the Deuteronomic legislation, e.g. 'The land unto which ye go to possess it', cf. Deut. vii. 1 'Then the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it'.

*The land...*is *an unclean land*] This expression (lit. land of unclean ness) is not found in the Pentateuch with reference to the promised land.

with the filthiness of the people of the land] R.V. **through the uncleanness of the peoples of the lands.** The same word 'uncleanness' (niddah) is used here as in the phrase an 'unclean land'. It occurs in 2 Chron. xxix. 5 'carry forth the *filthiness* out of the holy place'. Cf. Lam. i. 17. It is a strong word to denote anything that would convey defilement.

one end to another with their uncleanness. Now therefore 12
give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave *it* for an inheritance to your children for ever. And after all that is come upon us for our evil 13

with their abominations] R.V. **through their abominations.** Added by way of explanation. On the word see note on ver. 1. The 'abominations' are described as acts of impurity because these were the accompaniment of the local worship. Cf. Levit. xviii. 27 'All these abominations (vv. 6—23) have the men of the land done...and the land is defiled'.

from one end to another] Lit. 'from mouth to mouth'. Cf. almost the same expression in 2 Kings x. 21, xxi. 16. It means 'from one extremity to another'; perhaps the metaphor has been taken from a drinking vessel.

with their uncleanness] R.V. **with their filthiness.** The same word in the Hebrew as that rendered 'filthiness' in chap. vi. 21. It denotes 'impurity', 'defilement' generally. Cf. Zech. xiii. 2 'I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land'. See, for the special application, the whole passage Lev. xviii. 24—30.

12. *Now therefore give not*, &c.] This sentence reproduces the substance of Deut. vii. 3 'Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son'.

nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever] R.V. **...or their prosperity....** This phrase is found in Deut. xxiii. 6 'Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever', where the Ammonites and Moabites are especially referred to. The words had probably become almost proverbial. Here its application is destitute of any reference to the context in Deut. xxiii. The thought reproduces the prohibition of Ex. xxiii. 32 'Thou shalt make no covenant with them (i.e. the inhabitants of the land) nor with their gods'. Compare Jer. xxix. 7 'And seek the peace of the city, whither I have caused you to be carried away captive'.

that ye may be strong] The same blessing is promised Deut. xi. 8 'Therefore shall ye keep all the commandment...that ye may be strong'. The power to maintain God's gift was the measure of their true prosperity.

and eat the good of the land] Isai. i. 19 'If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land'. The present enjoyment of the gift. The clause, in spite of the reference to 'the land', has no verbal parallel in the Pentateuch.

and leave it *for an inheritance*] The blessing perpetuated. Practically equivalent to 'That thy days may be long in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee'. Cf. Deut. xi. 9. The allusion to Prov. xiii. 22; Ezek. xxxvii. 25 can only be of the most shadowy kind.

13—14. Great as have been our punishments in the past, they have

deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities *deserve*, and hast
14 given us *such* deliverance as this; should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations? wouldest thou not be angry with us till *thou* hadst consumed *us*, so that *there should be* no

been less than we deserved. Now that we have sinned yet again, what do we deserve but extermination?

13. *great trespass*] R.V. **great guilt.** Cf. on ver. 7. Not an isolated offence, but the condition of deep obligation for sin.

seeing that thou...hast, &c.] According to this rendering, Ezra asks as it were in grief and dismay, 'After all that is past, shall we take advantage of God's mercy to sin yet once more and offend against His majesty?' Another rendering, more difficult but quite admissible, translates the conjunction 'seeing that' (*ki*), as the mark of an exclamation. 'After all that has happened, *to think that* God should have so spared us!—shall we then provoke Him again by our disobedience?'

hast punished us less than our iniquities deserve] The words in the original are difficult. Literally, 'hast kept back, downward, from our sins'. Some have rendered 'hast as it were held back, and kept down from rising to view, many of (partitive) our sins'. Others, 'hast spared beneath our sins', i.e. thy mercy has been out of all proportion greater than our sins, has as it were gone deeper than our iniquities. The R.V. gives the general sense. The LXX. ἐκούφισας ἡμῶν τὰς ἀνομίας and Vulg. 'liberasti nos de iniquitate nostra' are paraphrastic.

such *deliverance as this*] R.V. **such a remnant.** The same word as in ver. 8.

14. *should we again*, &c.] R.V. **shall we again.**

break thy commandments] The work rendered 'break' is found with 'commandment' in Num. xv. 31, and is especially frequently found with 'covenant', e.g. Gen. xvii. 14; Deut. xxxi. 16; Judg. ii. 1; Isai. xxiv. 5; Jer. xxxi. 32; Ezek. xvii. 16 in the sense of 'annul', 'violate'. Compare its use in iv. 5 'frustrate their purpose'.

join in affinity] This word occurs once only in the Pentateuch, Deut. vii. 3.

with the people of these abominations] R.V. **with the peoples that do these abominations.** See note on ver. 11.

wouldest thou not be angry, &c.] The question expects the answer 'yes'. Ezra recalls the declarations of God's displeasure in such passages as Deut. vii. 4 'For he will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods; so will the anger of the LORD be *kindled against you, and he will destroy you utterly*', xi. 17; Jos. xxiii. 16. The tense is missed in the LXX. μὴ παροξυνθῇς and the Vulg. 'numquid iratus es'.

till thou *hadst consumed* us] The precise form of this phrase only occurs elsewhere in 2 Kings xiii. 17, 19 'till thou have (hadst) consumed them'; but a very similar form of it appears in 2 Chron. xxiv. 10 'until they had made an end', xxxi. 1 'until they had destroyed them all'. It

remnant nor escaping? O LORD God of Israel, thou *art* 15
righteous: for we remain *yet* escaped, as *it is* this day:
behold, we *are* before thee in our trespasses: for *we* cannot
stand before thee because of this.

means 'up to the point of extinction'. Cf. LXX. ἕως συντελείας. Vulg. 'usque ad consummationem'.

no remnant nor escaping] R.V. **no remnant nor any to escape.** It is hard to render the two words in English. 'Any to escape' is the same word as 'remnant' in vv. 8, 13. The two words occur together in 1 Chron. iv. 43 'they smote the remnant of the Amalekites that escaped'. The former word denotes simply the 'remainder'; the latter has the idea of 'survival from flight' (cf. ver. 15). The LXX. distinguishes by ἐγκατάλειμμα καὶ διασωζόμενον. The Vulgate renders 'reliquias ad salutem'.

15. The prayer ends in expression of complete surrender. There is no excuse to plead. The nation stands in its sin in the presence of the perfect God, and awaits the sentence of 'righteousness'.

O LORD God of Israel] R.V. **O LORD, the God of Israel.** See on i. 3. The prayer had begun 'O *my* God' (ver. 6). It ends, O LORD the God of *Israel*. The thought of his nation overmastered the supplicant.

thou art *righteous*] This must not be softened down as if it were 'thou art gracious'. The words are an acknowledgement of the perfect justice of God's dealings with Israel in the past. The next sentence 'for we are left a remnant' is not uttered in gratitude for the mercy which spared 'a remnant', but is added to express the greatness of the catastrophe, which had carried off the whole nation except 'a remnant'. And yet the visitation had been just. The prayer of Ezra (?) in Neh. ix. has a very similar phrase, ver. 33 'Howbeit thou art just (çaddīq) in all that is come upon us; for thou hast done truly, but we have done wickedly'. Thou art righteous (çaddīq), and we who are left 'a remnant' have failed to profit by the righteous judgement of the past. God is called 'righteous' in reference to the 'fixed and unalterable rule of truth and goodness'. Cf. Neh. ix. 8; 2 Chron. xii. 6; Ps. cxix. 137, cxxix. 4, cxlv. 7. (See Cheyne on Ps. vii. 17.)

as it is *this day*] Cf. ver. 7.

we are *before thee*] i.e. arraigned as it were before thy judgement seat. Ezra was praying 'before the house of God' (x. 2).

in our trespasses] R.V. **in our guiltiness.** See on ver. 7. Fresh guilt has been added to the old. There is nothing to plead in extenuation. Nor had there been in the past. Righteous as Jehovah was, He had granted 'a remnant': now the guiltiness of the remnant seemed to merit its extinction.

for we *cannot stand before thee because of this*] R.V. **for none can stand before thee because of this.** None, for all Israelites, innocent as well as guilty, are bound up together in that responsibility for the nation's guilt. Cf. Ps. lxxvi. 7 'And who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?' cxxx. 3 'If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?' Nah. i. 6 'Who can stand before his indig-

10 Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation *of* men and women and children: for the people
2 wept very sore. And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, *one* of

nation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger?' The Spirit alone gives the power to 'stand before' God and to hear His word. Ezek. ii. 1, 2.

because of this] See note on viii. 23, x. 2: i.e. on account of this last sin, in which the people have once more offended their God.

CHAP. X. 1—5. THE PEOPLE'S CONFESSION AND OATH.

1. *Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed*] R. V. **Now while Ezra prayed and made confession.** The Hebrew shows that the people were assembling during Ezra's prayer. The report of Ezra's public grief would quickly spread, and he had maintained his attitude of shame and humiliation throughout the day (ix. 4). The Vulgate 'Orante Esra et implorante' is more correct than the LXX. ὡς προσηύξατο Ἔσδρας καὶ ὡς ἐξηγόρευσε.

It will be observed that the 1st person is here dropped, having been maintained since vii. 27. Henceforward the Compiler only adapts instead of quoting Ezra's memoirs, or perhaps he here makes use of other materials.

'Made confession'. As in Neh. i. 6, ix. 2, 3; Dan. ix. 4, 20; 2 Chron. xxx. 22; Lev. v. 5, xvi. 21, xxvi. 40; Num. v. 7.

casting himself down before the house of God] In the agony of his confession he had ceased to kneel (ix. 5) and had prostrated himself on the ground.

before the house of God] Ezra was probably in one of the outer courts of the Temple, and in prayer turned himself in its direction, cf. 1 Kings viii. 30, 35, 38, &c. 2 Chron. xx. 9 'If evil come upon us...we will stand before this house and before thee (for thy name is in this house) and cry unto thee in our affliction, and thou wilt hear and save', Dan. vi. 10. See on ix. 15.

there assembled] R.V. **there was gathered together**, cf. ver. 7 'gather themselves together'.

out of Israel] See vii. 28. The word 'Israel' refers here as in vv. 2, 10 to the whole community, not as in ver. 5 to the laity.

a very great congregation...wept] Large numbers were of the same mind with Ezra.

2. *And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel*, one *of the sons of Elam*] R.V. **Shecaniah.** A Jehiel is mentioned in ver. 26 as one 'of the sons of Elam' that had married 'strange women'. It is hardly likely that Shecaniah would have taken action against his own father and mother (or stepmother); though, if he did, it would strikingly illustrate the intensity of the feeling aroused. 'The children of Elam' are mentioned in ii. 7, viii. 7.

the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this *thing*. Now therefore let us make a covenant 3
with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of

We have trespassed] See on ix. 2.

have taken strange wives] R.V. **have married strange women.** 'Have married' a word meaning literally 'caused to dwell' used in this technical sense here and vv. 10, 14, 17, 18; Neh. xiii. 23, 27.

of the people of the land] R.V. **of the peoples of the land.** 'of the land', not as in ix. 1, 2, 11 'of the lands'. Shecaniah refers especially to the heathen living amongst the people of Israel.

yet now there is hope in Israel] 'Hope'. This word in the Hebrew is used for the object of hope in Jer. xiv. 8, xvii. 13, l. 7. In 1 Chron. xxix. 15 'our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is no abiding (Heb. 'hope')', and in this passage, the source or means of 'hope' is denoted.

Shecaniah relied upon the promise attached to repentance (e.g. Deut. xxx. 1—10). 'Even now' corresponds to the 'and now' in ix. 10.

concerning this thing] The same words in the Hebrew as 'because of this' (ix. 15). Shecaniah clearly does not mean 'on account of this repentance', but 'with reference to this offence'.

3. *let us make a covenant* &c.] Compare other covenants undertaken by the people, e.g. 2 Chron. xv. 12, xxix. 10, xxxiv. 31, 32; Neh. x. 29; Jer. xxxiv. 15.

to put away the wives &c.] Either legal divorce or the annulling of the marriages by public decree. The marriages had been valid, but were now declared sinful. The method of separation was forcible expulsion. The case of the wives and of their children, who had become 'proselytes' and embraced the Israelite religion, is not taken into account. The words 'and such as are born of them' probably refer to the children of tender years.

according to the counsel of my lord] so R.V. text: R.V. Marg. Or, '*the Lord*'. The Hebrew text is 'Adonai', 'my Lord', and the Vulgate accordingly renders 'juxta voluntatem Domini'. It is objected, (1) that the word 'counsel' (as in ver. 8) seems in this context to imply human counsel, as generally. (2) Used of the Divine purpose, it is found chiefly in poetry and prophecy (e.g. Ps. xxxiii. 11; Is. v. 19, xix. 17; Jer. xlix. 20, l. 45). (3) The name 'Adonai' (Lord) as a Divine title only occurs elsewhere in these books, Neh. i. 11, iv. 14, viii. 10, x. 30. (4) The expression 'the counsel of the Lord and of those that tremble at the word of God' is harsh. The rendering 'my lord' requires us to read 'Adoni', a very slight change. This was apparently read by the LXX. and by 1 Esdr., where there is no mention of the Divine name. The application of the title 'my lord' to Ezra is peculiar (but see Neh. iii. 5), and the allusion to his 'counsel', which can only refer to the substance of Ezra's prayer, is not very natural. It is not easy to

those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and
4 let it be done according to the law. Arise; for *this* matter
belongeth unto thee: we also *will be* with thee: be of good
5 courage, and do *it*. Then arose Ezra, and made the chief

decide between the two readings. On the whole the R.V. text rendering is to be preferred. The tendency of Jewish scribes would be rather to introduce the Divine Name, if it was not in the text, than to alter it, if it was in the text, into a common word: and this tendency would be assisted, in this case, by the use of 'Adonai' in Neh. i. 11, iv. 14. If the rendering of the R. V. marg. be adopted, then the 'counsel of the Lord' will refer to the teaching of the law. The combination of the Divine name 'with those who trembled at the commandment of our God' may be paralleled by Ezr. vi. 14, or Acts xv. 28.

of those that tremble at &c.] Cf. note on ix. 4.

and let it be done according to the law] or 'and according to the law it shall be done'. The clause is not very definitely expressed. And it has been differently understood to mean either that the general law forbidding marriage with the heathen should now be observed, or that this particular act of 'putting away the strange wives' should be performed in accordance with the regulations for divorce contained in the law (e.g. Deut. xxiv. 1—4).

4. The appeal to Ezra.

Arise] Not a reference to Ezra's prostration but a summons to energetic action, Jos. i. 2; Jud. iv. 14; 1 Sam. xvi. 12 and often.

for this *matter* belongeth *unto thee:*] R.V. **for the matter** &c. Literally 'for this matter is upon thee'. Cf. Neh. xiii. 13, 'And their business was (lit. and it was upon them) to distribute unto their brethren'. Isai. ix. 6, 'And the government shall be upon his shoulder'. Ezra was marked out for the duty, partly because he had so publicly testified to his condemnation of the people's sin, partly because he had received the royal commission 'to teach' them that knew not the laws of his God (vii. 25).

we also will be *with thee*] R.V. **and we are with thee.** The R.V. gives the full meaning, by placing only a comma after 'thee'. The lead in the work was Ezra's, but Shechaniah and his friends were ready to cooperate at once in the reform. The present tense is therefore more appropriate than the future.

be of good courage, and do it] Literally, 'be strong, and do'. The responsibility of initiative required especial courage, when the policy would inevitably produce widespread discontent with no material compensation. David uses the same words to Solomon when entrusting to him the work of constructing the Temple. 1 Chron. xxviii. 10, 'Take heed now; for the LORD hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it': cf. 2 Chron. xix. 11, 'Deal courageously' (Heb. Be strong and do), are the words of encouragement given to Amariah, Zebadiah and the Levites by Jehoshaphat, as he commissioned them to act as judges among the people.

5. Ezra's prompt action: an oath administered to the princes.

priests, the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that *they* should do according to this word. And they sware. Then Ezra 6
rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib: and *when* he

the chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel] R.V. **the chiefs of the priests**. Here as in viii. 29 the A.V. by rendering 'chief priests' gives an erroneous meaning. 'The chiefs' here spoken of are the princes or leaders of the three groups into which the people divides itself at this time, priests, Levites, and Israel or laity. Cf. 'the chiefs of the priests' (2 Chron. xxxvi. 14), 'the chiefs of the Levites' (2 Chron. xxxv. 9), 'the princes (or chiefs) of Judah' (Neh. xii. 31), 'the princes of the people' (Neh. xi. 1). The rendering of the LXX. (ὥρκισε τοὺς ἄρχοντας τοὺς ἱερεῖς κ.τ.λ.) seems to make 'the princes' or chiefs a separate class from the priests and the Levites.

Ezra's policy was at once to bind to his side the leaders of the people. By administering to them the oath of cooperation in the work of reform, while public feeling was still intensely aroused, he secured from them a public assurance of support. After that, they could not well recede from their oath. If they did not second his efforts, their hands were effectually tied. In dealing with a community which was to all intents and purposes a religious oligarchy, to compromise the chiefs or princes in his favour was the first and surest step to a successful result.

according to this word] i.e. Shecaniah's proposal that the people should put away from them the foreign women, whom they had married.

6—15. The Assembly and the Reform.

6. *went into the chamber*] See on viii. 29, and cf. Neh. xiii. 4.

Johanan the son of Eliashib] R.V. **Jehohanan the son of Eliashib.** The best-known Eliashib of this period is the High-priest who appears as a contemporary of Nehemiah (Neh. iii. 1, xiii. 4, 28). In Neh. xii. 23 we find the mention of a 'Johanan the son of Eliashib', but who, by comparison with vv. 7 and 22, must have been this Eliashib's grandson. It is probable that the 'Jehohanan the son of Eliashib' is the same as that 'Johanan the son of Eliashib'. If so, how are we to account for a chamber, presumably in the Temple precincts, being assigned to one who was the grandson of the High-priest Eliashib? (*a*) Some suppose that Johanan the grandson of Eliashib was old enough at this time to receive as one of the High-priestly family a special chamber. But why should Ezra betake himself to the chamber of one who must have been but a mere boy? For Eliashib was living 20 years later (cf. Neh. xiii. 7). (*b*) Others suppose the Compiler to be using the language of a considerably later generation than that of Ezra; he knew of a certain chamber in the Temple's precincts as Johanan's chamber, because it had become associated with the name of Eliashib's grandson during his High-priesthood. This appears to be the most probable explanation. If so, the use of the name helps to determine the date at which Ezra's Memoirs were compiled. It is however possible that the Jehohanan the son of Eliashib was of a different family from the

came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water: for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had
7 been carried away. And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity,

Johanan the son of Joiada and grandson of Eliashib, and that the difficulty is only an apparent one arising from the similarity of names in the families of the same great house or tribe.

and when *he came thither, he did eat*, &c.] So the R.V. text. The R.V. marg. says 'According to some ancient versions, *and he lodged there*'. The Hebrew word for 'he came' is the same as that for 'went' in the previous clause. This reading is supported by the Hebrew text and by the LXX. (καὶ ἐπορεύθη ἐκεῖ). It is however hard to believe that it can be the original reading. (1) The repetition of the word is awkward. (2) The clause, stating that he refused to taste food, does not follow suitably upon the mention of his arrival. (3) The adverb in the original does not strictly mean 'thither', but 'there'. The parallel passage in 1 Esdras (ix. 2) has 'and having lodged there', and this reading is supported by the Syriac Peshitto and the Arabic. The variation in the Hebrew text requisite to give this meaning is exceedingly small. In the old Hebrew characters the two letters (ו and ך) are very liable to be confused, while the use of the very similar verb just before made an accidental repetition very possible.

This reading is probably correct, and we should accordingly translate 'And he lodged (or passed the night) there'. The words are then the same as in Gen. xxviii. 11, 'And he tarried there all night'; xxxii. 13, 'And he lodged there that night'; Jos. viii. 9, 'but Joshua lodged that night'. The point emphasized is that Ezra continued in the precincts of the Temple all that night and protracted his fast. 'He lodged there and did eat no bread nor drink water': i.e. while he lodged there, he fasted.

because of the transgression of them that had been carried away] R.V. **because of the trespass of them of the captivity.** 'Trespass', cf. ix. 4. 'Them of the captivity', i.e. 'haggolah', cf. on viii. 35.

7. *And they made proclamation* &c.] The phrase for making a proclamation is peculiar; it occurs also in chap. i. 1, where see note.

The authors of this proclamation are not mentioned. But we are evidently intended to understand the princes and the chiefs of the people (ver. 5) who had taken the oath administered by Ezra. That some little interval of time elapsed between the events just narrated and the issue of this proclamation is a natural supposition. The policy advocated by Shecaniah (vers. 2, 3) had been approved. But time and deliberation were needed to determine upon the best method of putting it into execution (see note on ix. 1).

throughout Judah and Jerusalem] That is to say, in every district in southern Palestine and in every quarter of the capital. Cf. 'Jerusalem and Judah' (ii. 1), 'Judah and Jerusalem' (iv. 6, v. 1, ix. 9).

unto all the children of the captivity] Cf. notes on this phrase ii. 1, iv 1, vi. 16, 19, viii. 35.

that *they* should gather themselves together *unto* Jerusalem;
and *that* whosoever would not come within three days, 8
according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all
his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated
from the congregation of those that had been carried away.
Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered them- 9
selves together *unto* Jerusalem within three days. It *was*
the ninth month, on the twentieth *day* of the month; and

8. *and* that *whosoever would not come*] R.V. **and that whosoever came not**, i.e. whosoever failed (not, whosoever refused) to appear. The causes for non-appearance are not hinted at. All defaulters were to be treated as contumacious.

within three days] An expression which shows within what narrow limits the new community was established. The mention of Bethel (ii. 28), Lod (ii. 33), and Jericho (ii. 34) as some of the most distant towns belonging to the Jews, shows that the requirement to be in Jerusalem within three days made no impossible demand upon the powers of an ordinarily active man.

according to the counsel of the princes and the elders] The real administrative body in Jerusalem. The representatives of the chief households and families. On the elders cf. v. 5.

all his substance should be forfeited] R.V. marg. Heb. *devoted*. A man's substance is his possessions, 'goods'. Cf. i. 4. The first part of the penalty was confiscation of property and the appropriation of the money, realized from its sale, by the Temple treasury. On 'devotion' (ḥerem) see Levit. xxvii. 28, 29. In early times 'devotion' was tantamount to 'destruction' (cf. Ex. xxii. 20; Jos. vii. 1—26, &c.; 1 Sam. xv. 8, 33).

and himself separated] The sentence of excommunication (see on Neh. xiii. 28). To be separated from the congregation was no mere decree of banishment. A man with such a sentence was to be outlawed and disowned by his own race. The community was a religious one. Its heaviest punishment was exclusion from its privileged ranks.

from the congregation of those that had been carried away] R.V. **from the congregation of the captivity.**

9. *all the men of Judah and Benjamin*] All the male population capable of attending. 'Men of Judah and Benjamin', cf. i. 5, iv. 1.

It was *the ninth month*] R.V. **it was the ninth month**—not a fresh sentence. The 'ninth month' was Chislev, corresponding nearly to our December. The Assyrian month Ki-shilivu is the same name. The month is mentioned in Neh. i. 1; Zech. vii. 1. On the 15th of this month 168 B.C. the Temple was profaned and the altar polluted by Antiochus Epiphanes; on the 25th of this month, three years later, 165 B.C., Judas the Maccabee and his companions celebrated 'the Dedication' or Purification of the Temple, which was afterwards observed as an annual festival (cf. John x. 22). See 1 Macc. i. 54, iv. 59. The general assembly was therefore summoned only *four* months after Ezra's arrival (see vii. 8).

all the people sat in the street of the house of God, trembling because of *this* matter, and for the great rain.
10 And Ezra the priest stood up, and said unto them, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to in-
11 crease the trespass of Israel. Now therefore make confession unto the LORD God of your fathers, and do his

sat in the street of the house of God] R.V. **sat in the broad place before the house of God.** Literally 'in the broad place of the house of God'. Cf. Neh. viii. 1 'And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the broad place (A.V. street) that was before the water gate', and 3. An area belonging to 'the house of God' in which the whole assembly could collect, must have been a large open court. See the same word in Deut. xiii. 16 and 2 Sam. xxi. 12, where an open place or square in the middle of a town gives a truer sense than the word 'street'. The idea of the word in the original is width, not narrowness.

trembling because of this *matter*] The popular apprehension was aroused to the utmost, partly by the penalty for non-attendance at the assembly (ver. 8), partly by the rumours of the action proposed by Shecaniah and approved by the princes, partly by dread of Divine wrath at the national transgression. The verb used here for 'trembling' occurs elsewhere in the O. T. only in Dan. x. 11 and Ps. civ. 32.

and for the great rain] R.V. marg. Heb. *the rains*. We must suppose that the rains, which prevail during December in Palestine, were on this occasion exceptionally 'heavy' and seemed to the people to denote the Divine displeasure (cf. 1 Sam. xii. 18), besides adding to the discomfort of gathering to Jerusalem. This was 'the early rain' following after seed-time (cf. Deut. xi. 14; Jer. v. 24; Joel ii. 23) as distinguished from 'the latter rain' of spring-time.

10—11. Ezra's address to the people: (1) the offence stated; (2) the reform commanded, consisting of (*a*) public confession, (*b*) practical amendment.

10. *Ezra the priest*] See note on vii. 11.

Ye have transgressed] R.V. **Ye have trespassed,** as in vv. 2, 6, ix. 4 and Neh. i. 8, xiii. 27. It is best to keep 'transgress' and 'transgression' for the Hebrew words 'pāsha' and 'pesha', which only once occur in this book (x. 13) but are very frequent elsewhere.

and have taken strange wives] R.V. **and have married strange women.** See note on ver. 2.

to increase the trespass of Israel] R.V. **to increase the guilt of Israel.** The 'guilt' or 'guiltiness of Israel', see on ix. 6, 15. The fresh offence had added to the black account against Israel.

11. *make confession unto the LORD God of your fathers*] R.V. **make confession** (marg. Or, *give thanks*) *unto the LORD, the God of your fathers.* 'Make confession'. Literally 'give thanksgiving or praise'. The substantive is connected with the verb which in its reflexive form means, as in ver. 1, 'made confession'. It is found elsewhere in these books (Neh. xii. 27, 31, 38—40; 2 Chron. xxix. 31, xxxiii. 16) with the mean-

pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives. Then all the congrega- 12
tion answered and said *with* a loud voice, As thou hast said,

ing of 'thanksgiving', which is the general sense of the word in other books (Lev. vii. 12, 13, 15; Ps. xxvi. 7, xlii. 4, l. 14, 23, lvi. 12, c. 4, cvii. 22, cxvi. 17, cxlvii. 7; Is. li. 3; Jer. xvii. 26, xxx. 19, xxxiii. 11; Am. iv. 5; Jon. ii. 9). The only possible exception is Jos. vii. 19 'My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and make confession (marg. Or, *give praise*) unto him'. There, as in this passage, 'make confession' is a good paraphrase rather than a strict translation. 'Praise' was given to God by the utterance of confession. The penitent who renounced his sin and threw himself upon the mercies of God rendered that true praise of trust and love, from which 'confession' springs. Cf. Ps. l. 23 'Whoso offereth the sacrifice of *thanksgiving* glorifieth me'. On 'the LORD, the God of your fathers', see note on viii. 28.

and do his pleasure] The words of praise to be verified in action. The same phrase as in Ps. xl. 8 'I delight *to do thy will*, O God', cxliii. 10 'Teach me *to do thy will*'.

and...from the people of the land, and from the strange wives] R.V. **from the peoples of the land and from the strange women.** See note on ver. 2. The separation entailed not merely the divorce of the wives but a complete breaking of intercourse with all residents in the land who had not adopted the religion of the Jews.

12—14. The resolution of the general assembly epitomised. A general assent to Ezra's proposal. The time of the year and the magnitude of the task make it necessary to appoint a commission to carry it into execution.

12. *Then all the congregation*, &c.] The deliberations are not recorded. The substance of their decision is here paraphrased. The method of its expression was probably by unanimous acclamation. We can hardly suppose that there was free discussion. The princes debated and harangued the multitude: the multitude listened and expressed disapproval or approbation by cries and shouting.

with *a loud voice*] Cf. iii. 12; 2 Sam. xv. 23.

As thou hast said, so must we do] R.V. **As thou hast said concerning us, so must we do.** R.V. marg. '*As thou hast said, so it behoveth us to do*'. Literally the clause runs 'According to thy word (or words) upon us to do'. It is a disputed point whether 'upon us' is to be taken with what precedes or with what follows, i.e. 'according to thy word respecting us, it is necessary to do' or 'according to thy word, it falls upon us to do'. (*a*) The rendering of the R.V. text is that of the Vulgate 'juxta verbum tuum ad nos, sic fiat', and is supported by the traditional Jewish interpretation supplied by the Hebrew accents. The sentence is then clearly greatly condensed, and although the construction of the verb 'to do' is very harsh, the meaning is clear. (*b*) As however the rest of the people's reply shows no symptom of such compression, the alternative explanation of the rendering in the margin seems prefer-

13 so must we do. But the people *are* many, and *it is* a time of much rain, and *we are* not able to stand without, neither *is this* a work of one day or two: for we are many that have
14 transgressed in this thing. Let now our rulers of all the congregation stand, and let all *them* which have taken strange wives in our cities come at appointed times, and

able. The use of the preposition 'upon', with a sense of 'duty' or 'obligation' occurred in ver. 4. Cf. Neh. xiii. 13; 2 Sam. xviii. 11. The people then accept the responsibility in which their assent involves them.

13. Such an enquiry must be of a lengthy nature. The matter cannot be summarily disposed of. The people who have come in from a distance cannot in the rainy weather protract their stay in the city by living and sleeping in the open air, as they would have done had it been summer.

for we are many that have transgressed in this thing] R.V. **for we have greatly transgressed in this matter.** The A.V. is not the correct rendering, but it expresses the general meaning. The greatness of the transgression consisted in the number of the offenders as well as in the heinousness of the offence. 'Transgress', see note on ver. 10. The verb (pâshâ) frequently means to rebel (e.g. 2 Kings i. 1, iii. 5, 7, viii. 20, 22; 2 Chron. xxi. 8). The transgression of the people was 'rebellion' against 'the law' of the Divine king.

14. A commission recommended.

Let now our rulers of all the congregation stand] R.V. **Let now our princes be appointed** (marg. Heb. *stand*) **for all the congregation.** The A.V. fails to give the idea of the original, where a difficulty is occasioned by the preposition 'for'. There are practically two ways of explaining the passage (1) Let now our princes stand for (i.e. in the place of *ἀντὶ*) all the congregation. (2) Let there now stand our princes for (i.e. in the interests of, *ὑπὲρ*) all the congregation. The latter is the preferable. The commission then was to consist of the princes who, in conjunction with the local elders and judges, should enquire into the cases that had occurred in each town and district.

and let all them *which have taken strange wives in our cities*] R.V. **and let all them that are in our cities which have married strange women.** The R.V. reproduces the two relative sentences of the original, the one giving the locality of the offender, the other particularizing the offence; perhaps the formal character of the actual wording of the decree here peeps out.

in our cities] This expression seems to exclude Jerusalem. The case of those who dwelt in the capital could be investigated by the princes on the spot and without delay. In the case of inhabitants of other towns, the officials of each town were to be convened at Jerusalem and to assist the permanent commission; the offenders at the same time were to be summoned to attend the investigation in person.

at appointed times] Cf. 'at times appointed', Neh. x. 34, xiii. 31.

with them the elders of every city, and the judges thereof, until the fierce wrath of our God for this matter be turned

the elders of every city, and the judges thereof] i.e. the representatives of the populace and the administrators of justice, belonging to each town.

until the fierce wrath of our God...be turned from us] So also R.V. It is much to be doubted whether this can be regarded as a satisfactory rendering.

(1) There is no real connexion between the previous sentence 'let our princes be appointed &c.' and the words 'until the fierce wrath, &c.' 'The fierce wrath' had not been displayed, as in David's day, by a visitation such as a plague or a famine, nor by any fresh hostile oppression. There is therefore no natural explanation for the expression, such as there is for the very similar words 'Hide thyself for a little moment, *until* the indignation be overpast', Isa. xxvi. 20; 'Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I take refuge, *until* these calamities be overpast', Ps. lvii. 1. If there was no external symptom of the Divine displeasure, its continuance could only be apprehended mentally or morally, and would have no sort of relation to the investigation and punishment of the offence.

(2) The work of the commission—in a great measure an undertaking of popular contrition, but very largely also the expression of a definite policy of excluding aliens from the community—could not be concluded, *until* its ends had been accomplished. Now unless we are prepared to change the words 'until the fierce wrath, &c.' into so different a meaning as 'until the cause of the fierce wrath &c. be removed', it seems that a limitation of time has no rightful place here.

(3) The English rendering ignores the literal transitive meaning of the verb. Literally translated, the sentence runs, 'up to the point of, to turn away the fierce wrath of our God'. It seems very probable that we should reject the temporal signification of the word rendered 'until', and treat it as an instance of a redundancy not uncommon in late Hebrew. It will then merely strengthen the preposition, denoting purpose, prefixed to the verb. Supposing this to be the true explanation, the rendering will be 'with a view (or, unto this end) to turn away the fierce wrath of our God'.

The verb, which is transitive, is thus given its proper force familiar in other similar passages. Ps. lxxviii. 38 'Yea, many a time *turned he his anger away*'; cvi. 23 'Had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach *to turn away his wrath*'; Jer. xviii. 20 'Remember how I stood before thee to speak good for them, *to turn away thy fury from them*'; Prov. xv. 1 'A soft answer *turneth away* wrath'.

The English version gives the general sense in the same way as the Vulgate 'donec revertatur ira Dei nostri a vobis'. But the English reader would never guess that the verb is used, not in the intransitive form 'to return' (as in Num. xxv. 4; 2 Chron. xxix. 10, xxx. 8: Jer. xxx. 24), but in the causative 'to cause to return', 'to turn away' 'to avert'.

15 from us. Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah were employed about this *matter:* and

the fierce wrath of our God] This particular expression 'the fierce wrath', as applied to the Almighty, occurs in the O.T. thirty-four times, being used with special frequency (ten times) in Jeremiah. See also 2 Chron. xxviii. 11, 13, xxix. 10, xxx. 8.

for this matter] R.V. **until this matter be dispatched.** Marg. Or, *as touching this matter.* Literally rendered, the Hebrew words give 'up to the point of (or, until), to this matter'. The R.V. apparently coordinates this clause with the preceding one. But there can be but one opinion that the whole sentence 'Let now our princes be appointed ...until the fierce wrath of our God be turned from us, until this matter be dispatched', is quite intolerably harsh. The last clause only receives definiteness from the insertion of the words 'be dispatched'. But it constitutes a most empty addition to state that the enquiry should last until its business was dispatched. The present phrase is apparently only another instance, if the text be correct, of the same redundancy of expression in the later Hebrew mentioned above. The word, rendered 'until', amplifies the preposition. And the usage of the compound preposition is the same as that of the simple preposition when found with the same words elsewhere. Gen. xix. 21 'concerning this thing'; 1 Sam. xxx. 24; Dan. i. 14 'in this matter'. The rendering of the margin is therefore to be preferred, 'to turn away the fierce wrath of our God *as touching this matter*'. The words are the same in meaning as ix. 15 'because of this', x. 2 'concerning this thing'.

15. Slight opposition.

Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah were employed about this matter] R.V. **stood up against** (Marg. Or, *were appointed over*) **this** matter.

The word 'only', the English reader should take notice, is not used in the sense of 'alone', but as an adversative, 'notwithstanding', 'nevertheless'. It would therefore naturally introduce the mention of an exception or of an opposition.

There are two views as to the correct rendering of the verse. The point of difference lies in the Hebrew words variously rendered 'were appointed over' and 'stood up against'.—(1) The rendering of the A.V. 'were employed about', though less accurate, agrees with that of the R.V. margin 'were appointed over'.—The Hebrew literally translated is 'stood over'; (*a*) it is noticeable that this verb to 'stand' is the same as that used in the previous verse 12 'Let now our rulers *be appointed* (Heb. stand)'. If there were no other point to be considered, it would seem most natural that the narrative should be resumed with the same verb as had just occurred in a reported speech and with the repetition of the phrase 'about this matter' (ix. 15). (*b*) After the people's declaration, it was to be expected that the names of some of the commission would be recorded. (*c*) The use of the adversative may be taken to imply a departure from the first proposal of a commission. (*d*) The mention of Meshullam and Shabbethai, who 'helped', seems to suggest cooperation in the execution of, not in the opposition to, the

Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite helped them. And 16
the children of the captivity did so. And Ezra the priest,

scheme. (2) The rendering of the R.V. 'stood up against' has greater probability. (*a*) It accounts for the use of the adversative 'only'. (*b*) The use of the words to 'stand over or against' in a hostile sense is supported by 1 Chron. xxi. 1; 2 Chron. xx. 23; Dan. viii. 25, xi. 14. (*c*) Except for this verse we should have no record of any of the opposition, which, considering the extreme severity of the measures, would be almost inevitable. It is indeed a reasonable objection that the mention of the opposition is very awkwardly inserted between the people's declaration and the statement (in ver. 16) of their action. But this objection applies to the verse (15) as a whole rather than to the special interpretation of it, and, as a matter of fact, the abruptness of the insertion is due to the Compiler's work, and is scarcely lessened by the alternative interpretation. Another objection, that the word 'help' used of Meshullam and Shabbethai would not naturally express their support of an opposition, can only be partially admitted. It is true that, as only four opponents are mentioned by name, they might much more easily have been grouped together, unless there was some special reason for separating them. But whatever special reason there was for separating the pairs of names, would apply equally well, whether the individuals were said to carry out or to oppose the scheme. This objection therefore like the other is equally well raised against any explanation of the verse; it does not affect the selection to be made between the two renderings.

Accepting the rendering of the R.V., we need not suppose that these four individuals were the only opponents of Ezra's policy. They are here mentioned as the leaders of the opposition, and there is every reason to suppose that their opinions must have been shared by very many.

and Meshullam] Possibly the same as the Meshullam mentioned in ver. 29. If so, we may suppose from verse 19 that he along with the others who had similarly offended 'gave his hand' that he would put away his wife. Perhaps he had been convinced of the public necessity for the action, which for private reasons he felt obliged to condemn. This conflict of feeling might account for his being described as only 'helping' the opponents.

Shabbethai the Levite] This name does not occur in 23 or 24 among the Levites who had offended. Shabbethai may have opposed for other reasons, either because members of his family were implicated, or because he considered the letter of the law to be strained by the adoption of the proposed measures. The opposition of a Levite deserved especial record.

helped them] As if their position were a subordinate one in the opposition. They supported, but did not head the movement, cf. 1 Kings i. 7 'they following Adonijah helped him'.

16, 17. The Commission at work.

16. *the children of the captivity did so*] For this expression cf. ver. 7.

with certain chief of the fathers, after the house of their fathers, and all of them by *their* names, were separated, and sat down in the first day of the tenth month to examine
17 the matter. And they made an end with all the men

The proposal was no sooner made than it was carried into execution. The personal influence of Ezra must account for the ready acquiescence of the people generally.

And Ezra the priest] Ezra is here mentioned first, and it is probable that he presided over the court of enquiry. On his title 'the priest', cf. vii. 11.

with *certain chief of the fathers, after the house of their fathers*] R.V. with **certain heads of fathers' houses, after their fathers' houses.** The word 'with' does not appear in the Hebrew, but, if the existing text be correct, we clearly need some such copula, which is supplied in the LXX. and Vulg. The phrase 'certain heads of fathers' houses, after their fathers' houses' seems to mean that each 'father's house' (cf. ii. 3, &c.) was represented on the commission by its chief or head. Literally rendered, the Hebrew runs, 'Ezra the priest, men, heads of fathers' houses, &c.'

all of them by their *names*] A full list of the households being furnished, the representative chiefs of certain 'houses' were required by name to attend. Cf. 'were expressed by name', viii. 20.

were separated] i.e. were set apart for the work. The use of this word 'separated' shows that a certain number and not all of the chiefs were employed on this occasion. The text is not quite free from suspicion. The absence of the copula before 'men (or, certain) heads' taken in conjunction with the reading of the Syriac Peshitto favours another rendering 'And Ezra the priest separated (or set apart for the work) certain men (that were) heads &c.' In other words Ezra made the necessary selection. Not all the heads of the great houses were summoned to sit on the commission. We read of ninety-eight in ii. 3–61, and this number would have been far too unwieldy for the purpose. Certain of them were therefore to be set apart from the whole number. And Ezra was the natural person to make the selection. Having recently arrived from Babylon, he would be impartial, while the fact of his having originated the whole movement marked him out to be head of the enquiry.

, *and sat down*] R.V. **; and they sat down.** The R.V. separates the clause more definitely from the preceding one. The Hebrew phrase is the same as the English 'and the commission held its first sitting'.

in the first day of the tenth month] The first of Tebeth (see Esth. ii. 16), the Assyrian Tibi-tuv, about the same as our January.

to examine the matter] The Hebrew word 'to examine' is of very strange form, and looks as if the name of 'Darius' had been carelessly introduced by a copyist in the place of the similar word 'to examine'. He was perhaps reminded, by the look of the letters, of the word similarly formed composing the familiar name of the king.

17. *And they made an end with all the men*, &c.] The Hebrew runs

that had taken strange wives by the first day of the first month.

And among the sons of the priests there were found that 18
had taken strange wives: *namely*, of the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren; Maaseiah, and Eliezer, and Jarib, and Gedaliah. And they gave their hands that 19
they would put away their wives; and *being* guilty, *they*

'And they made an end with the whole (business), i.e. the men that had, &c.' The English rendering expresses the meaning. But the wording of the present Hebrew text can hardly be correct, and there is some ground for the conjecture that the words 'the men that had married strange wives' found their way into the text from a heading or a marginal gloss.

that had taken strange wives] R.V. **that had married strange women.**

by the first day of the first month] The investigation had lasted precisely three months. It lasted until the 1st of Nisan, having been continued throughout the months of Tebeth, Shebat (Zech. i. 7) and Adar (Ezr. vi. 15).

18—44. THE LIST OF THOSE WHO 'HAD MARRIED STRANGE WOMEN'.

The record of the names was probably one of the documents officially preserved. The publicity of such a list was in itself a punishment to the offenders and a warning to others.

As in chap. ii., the list falls into the three groups of Priests, Levites, and Israel (or Laity), i.e. 17 Priests, 10 Levites, 86 'of Israel'—113 in all.

18—22. PRIESTS.

18. *that had taken strange wives*] R.V. **that had married strange women**: the R.V. puts a colon after 'women', and a comma after 'brethren'. The 'Jeshua the son of Jozadak' here mentioned is clearly the High-priest, the contemporary of Zerubbabel. In chap. ii. 36 we have mention of 'the children of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three'. It is to the house of Jedaiah that these four priests belonged; for in that passage as in this, the houses of Immer, Harim and Pashur are mentioned immediately afterwards. Whether Maaseiah, Eliezer, Jarib and Gedaliah were grandsons or only kinsmen of Jeshua the son of Jozadak we are not told.

19. *they gave their hands*] R.V. **their hand.** The Hebrew has the singular. On this symbol of a promise or pledge compare 2 Kings x. 15 'If it be, give me thine hand. And he gave him his hand'. Ezek. xvii. 18 'And behold, he had given his hand, and yet hath done all these things'. Lam. v. 6 'We have given the hand to the Egyptians'. 2 Chron. xxx. 8 'But yield yourselves (Heb. give the hand) unto the LORD'.

and being *guilty*, &c.] It has been supposed that whereas the solemn pledge or promise, to put away the strange women, was made by all,

20 *offered* a ram of the flock for their trespass. And of the
21 sons of Immer; Hanani, and Zebadiah. And of the sons
of Harim; Maaseiah, and Elijah, and Shemaiah, and Jehiel,
22 and Uzziah. And of the sons of Pashur; Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethaneel, Jozabad, and Elasah.
23 Also of the Levites; Jozabad, and Shimei, and Kelaiah,
24 (the same *is* Kelita,) Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer. Of the singers also; Eliashib: and of the porters; Shallum, and Telem, and Uri.
25 Moreover of Israel: of the sons of Parosh; Ramiah, and Jeziah, and Malchiah, and Miamin, and Eleazar, and Mal-
26 chijah, and Benaiah. And of the sons of Elam; Mattaniah,

the priests alone had to offer the sacrifice of a ram. The sacrifice of a ram for a guilt offering is enjoined, 'if anyone commit a trespass and sin unwittingly, in the holy things of the LORD' (see Lev. v. 14—19). There is however no real reason for limiting the guilt offering to the priests. The passage from Leviticus makes no such restriction. It is probable that this verse represents the form of solemn renunciation imposed upon all the offenders, i.e. the promise and the guilt offering. It is mentioned after the first names on the list, and should be understood after each recorded group of names. The repetition of the formula was considered unnecessary.

being *guilty*] These words sound like the sentence of the commission, after investigating each case.

20, 21, 22. The sons of Immer, Harim and Pashur. In Ezra ii. 37—39 and Neh. vii. 40—42 the order of the names is Immer, Pashur and Harim. In 1 Chron. xxiv. 8—14 'Harim' is the third and Immer the sixteenth priestly course: see notes on Ezra ii. 37, &c.

Several of the names here mentioned occur in the lists of Neh. viii. xii.

23—25. LEVITES, SINGERS, AND PORTERS.

THE LEVITES.

23. *Kelaiah (the same is Kelita)*] See Neh. viii. 7, x. 10, Kelita. Jozabad, Neh. viii. 7.

24. *Of the singers also*] R.V. **And of the singers.** There is no variety in the copula, such as the A.V. would imply. Only one 'singer' is recorded in the list of offenders. On the prominence given in these books to the 'singers,' see *Introd.*

25—43. ISRAEL, OR THE LAITY,

as distinguished from priests and Levites. Cf. ii. 2 'the men of the people of Israel'. ix. 1 'the people of Israel, and the priests and the Levites'.

Moreover of Israel] R.V. **And of Israel.** There is no variety to

Zechariah, and Jehiel, and Abdi, and Jeremoth, and Eliah.
And of the sons of Zattu; Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, 27
and Jeremoth, and Zabad, and Aziza. Of the sons also of 28
Bebai; Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, *and* Athlai. And of 29
the sons of Bani; Meshullam, Malluch, and Adaiah, Jashub,
and Sheal, and Ramoth. And of the sons of Pahath-moab; 30
Adna, and Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezaleel,
and Binnui, and Manasseh. And *of* the sons of Harim; 31
Eliezer, Ishijah, Malchiah, Shemaiah, Shimeon, Benjamin, 32
Malluch, *and* Shemariah. Of the sons of Hashum; Matte- 33

break the simplicity of the list. The names of the houses here mentioned have all been mentioned in chap. ii. Thus

Parosh (ver. 25)	in Ezra ii.	3 :	number of offenders	7
Elam (ver. 26)	,,	7	,, ,,	6
Zattu (ver. 27)	,,	8	,, ,,	6
Bebai (ver. 28)	,,	11	,, ,,	4
Bani (ver. 29)	,,	10	,, ,,	6
Pahath-Moab (ver. 30)	,,	6	,, ,,	8
Harim (ver. 31)	,,	32	,, ,,	8
Hashum (ver. 33)	,,	19	,, ,,	7
Bani (ver. 34)	,,	10	,, ,,	27
Nebo (ver. 43)	,,	29	,, ,,	7

In this list, as compared with that in Ezra ii., the following points may be observed:

(*a*) The house of Bani is twice mentioned (ver. 29 and ver. 33). This is almost certainly due to an early error in the text. The conjecture that the name of Bigvai (Ezra ii. 14) or of Bezai (Ezra ii. 17) should be, in one instance or the other, substituted for that of Bani is not improbable, especially as otherwise there are seven houses (Ezra ii. 12—19) in succession not mentioned here.

(*b*) The disproportionately large number of offenders belonging to the second Bani (ver. 34) makes it probable that we have lost the names of three other houses. It will be noticed that the 'sons of Nebo' are the only representatives of about twenty towns mentioned in Ezra ii. 21—35.

(*c*) The order of the list of houses is here quite different from that of Ezra ii., an illustration probably of the faithfulness with which the various extant lists were reproduced.

26. *Jehiel*] 'of the sons of Elam', see note on ver. 2.

29. *and Ramoth*] R.V. **Jeremoth**. Marg. 'Another reading is, *and Ramoth*'. The reading of the C'thib is 'Jeremoth'; of the K'ri, of the LXX. and Vulg. 'and Ramoth' (LXX. καὶ Ῥημώθ, et Ramoth). The reading of C'thib 'Jeremoth' is nevertheless preferable. It has support in 3 Esdras ix. 30 'and Jeremoth' (καὶ Ἱερεμώθ). It is also the less familiar word and would be more likely to undergo change to 'and Ramoth' than vice versa.

nai, Mattathah, Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, *and*
34 Shimei. Of the sons of Bani; Maadai, Amram, and Uel,
35, 36 Benaiah, Bedeiah, Chelluh, Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib,
37, 38 Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaasau, and Bani, and Binnui,
39, 40 Shimei, and Shelemiah, and Nathan, and Adaiah, Mach-
41 nadebai, Shashai, Sharai, Azareel, and Shelemiah, Shema-
42, 43 riah, Shallum, Amariah, *and* Joseph. Of the sons of Nebo;
Jeiel, Mattithiah, Zabad, Zebina, Jadau, and Joel, Benaiah.
44 All these had taken strange wives: and *some* of them had
wives by *whom* they had children.

35. *Chelluh*] R.V. **Cheluhi.** Marg. 'Another reading is, *Cheluhu*'.

37. *and Jaasau*] R.V. **and Jaasu.** Marg. 'Another reading is, *Jaasai*'. The LXX. clearly had 'Jaasu', which they mistook for a verb and rendered 'and they did or made' (*καὶ ἐποίησαν*) regardless of the lack of meaning. The C'thib has 'Jaasu': the K'ri 'Jaasai'.

43. *Jadau*] R.V. **Iddo.** Marg. 'Another reading is, *Jaddai*'. Here the LXX. has Jadai ('Ιαδαὶ) and 1 Esdr. ix. 35 Edais ('Ηδαΐς), which agree with the reading of the K'ri. The reading of the C'thib is 'Iddo', and is preferred by the R.V. as in the three preceding instances (vv. 29, 35, 37).

44. *All these had taken strange wives*] So also the R.V., a different phrase in the original from that rendered 'had married strange women'. See on ix. 2.

and some *of them had wives by* whom *they had children*] So R.V. Marg. Or, *some of the wives had borne children*. The clause in the original is beset with difficulties. Literally rendered it seems to be 'And there were of them (masc.) wives, and they (masc.) begat children'. The LXX. renders freely 'And they begat of them sons' (*καὶ ἐγέννησαν ἐξ αὐτῶν υἱούς*) agreeing generally with the A.V. and R.V. text. The Vulgate has 'And there were of them wives which had borne children', agreeing with the margin of the R.V. This, it must be confessed, gives the best sense, although it does violence to the grammar in the matter of genders. The exact purpose of the clause is also a matter of uncertainty. (1) By some it is supposed that the clause is intended to illustrate the difficulties with which this general divorce was attended. The action was complicated by the question of the children. (2) Others think that it is added to show how thoroughly the commission was carried out. Mothers and their children were alike driven forth, in accordance with Shecaniah's proposal (ver. 3) 'Let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives and such as are born of them'. The probability that we are here confronted with another instance of textual corruption receives support from the parallel passage, 1 Esdr. ix. 36 'And they put them away along with their children', which suggests the existence of a different original text.

NOTE ON CHAPTERS IX. AND X.

The great severity which characterises Ezra's policy, as described in these two chapters, calls for special notice. The fact that he was so close a student of the law lends peculiar importance to his acts. His own words (ix. 10—12) indicate his view. The Jews by contracting marriages with strange women had violated the law of God. They had courted a renewal of national catastrophe. Their only hope lay in the renewal of God's mercy. Their present duty was clear. They must prove the sincerity of their repentance by putting away the 'strange women'. Though it meant ruin to the happiness of scores of homes, the step would vindicate 'the commandment' and eradicate the source of peril to the people.

The laws to which Ezra must have referred would have been those found in Ex. xxiii. 31—33, xxxiv. 12—16; Deut. vii. 1—5.

These passages contain prohibitions, very similar in character, directed against intermarriage with the nations that dwelt in Canaan, on the ground that such marriages would inevitably lead to idolatry and to the abominations connected with idolatrous worship. The evils arising from a disregard of these laws are touched upon in Judges iii. 5—6, where the language, if based upon that of the legislation quoted above, belongs to the Compiler rather than to an early fragment of writing.

The laws themselves, which are obviously more ancient in substance than the literary shape in which they are presented to us, must indeed at an early time have become disregarded (cf. Judg. xi.; 2 Sam. xi. 3; 1 Kings xi. 1); but their antiquity is shown by the threefold treatment of the subject, perhaps also by the apparent allusions to the same subject in Gen. xxiv. 3, xxvii. 46.

It was not strange however that the prohibition should become a dead letter, when marriage with foreigners generally, and even with Ammonites and Moabites, was permitted by custom (cf. Lev. xxiv. 10; Deut. xxi. 11, 12; Ruth i. 4; 2 Sam. iii. 3; 1 Kings iii. 1, xiv. 21; 1 Chron. ii. 17, 34, &c.), when the rights of the stranger were respected and safe-guarded (Ex. xii. 49; Lev. xxiv. 22), when Edomite and Egyptian could be received in the third generation into Israelite citizenship (Deut. xxiii. 7—8).

The rigour of Ezra's reform included all 'foreign wives' among the inhabitants of the seven proscribed nations of Canaan (Deut. vii. 1—5). The severest code was accepted as the highest standard of action. The exclusiveness, which the law had required to be exercised towards Canaanites alone, was now to be practised towards all alike. If the letter of the law was exceeded, the critical position of the Jewish community explains the measure. The permanence of Judaism depended on the religious separateness of the Jews. The holy mission of the Jewish people could alone be realized by complete freedom from contamination with idolatrous influences.

By the dissolution of marriage with the heathen Ezra sought to check at its source the stream of laxer conceptions upon religious duty. By

demanding of the people so heavy a penalty, he taught them that the purity of 'the holy seed' was worthy of so great a sacrifice. He awoke the national pride in their call to be the 'peculiar people' of the LORD. His action even if it strained the letter of the law, as it has been transmitted to us, enforced the sovereignty of its rule. He fenced off the people against the subtler temptations to idolatry and averted the imminent danger of his time, the fusion of the Jews at Jerusalem with the semi-heathen 'peoples of the land'.

THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAH.

THE words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it 1
came to pass in the month Chisleu, *in* the twentieth

PART I. NEHEMIAH'S FIRST VISIT TO JERUSALEM. THE REBUILDING OF THE WALLS.

Ch. i.	1—4.	The Evil Tidings.
	5—11.	Nehemiah's Prayer.
ii.	1—10.	The Royal Commission to Nehemiah.
	11—20.	The Work of Rebuilding the Walls undertaken.
iii.		The Distribution of the Work.
iv.		The Opposition from without.
v.		The Difficulties in the City.
vi.		The Final Intrigues; and Completion of the Walls.
vii.	1—5.	The Protection of the City.
	5—73 *a*.	The Register of those who returned with Zerubbabel.

I.—VII. 73 *a*. EXTRACT FROM THE MEMOIRS OF NEHEMIAH.

1. The Superscription. 'In many MSS. and editions the beginning of this book is closely united with the last verse of Ezra, and in some it appears without line or interval between as part of Ezra' (Davidson's *Hebrew Text*).

The words] R.V. marg. *the history*. (*a*) The rendering 'words' merely calls attention to the fact that we here have a portion of the writings of Nehemiah himself. (*b*) The rendering 'history' is more formal, and is capable of being understood in two different ways, (1) as a reference to a well-known work of history from the pen of Nehemiah, as in 'the histories (marg. Heb. *words*) of Shemaiah, the prophet, and Iddo, the seer' (2 Chron. xii. 15) and 'the history (marg. Heb. *words*) of Jehu, the son of Hanani' (2 Chron. xx. 34); (2) as a descriptive heading of the present book, 'the history of Nehemiah' being equivalent to 'the acts of Nehemiah'; the common expression 'the acts of,' e.g. Solomon (1 Kings xi. 41), is literally 'the words of.'

In order to choose between these renderings, we must remember that the clause is probably an editorial heading, inserted by the Chronicler in the compilation of his work. Perhaps the preference should be given to (*a*) 'the words of,' on the ground that when Ezra

2 year, as I was in Shushan the palace, that Hanani, one of my brethren, came, he and *certain* men of Judah; and I

and Nehemiah formed one continuous work it was not likely that a heading (whether giving the title of a work that is quoted, or describing the remainder of the Chronicler's book) would be inserted in the middle of the text. But the insertion of a note, to explain the transition from the 1st person, used in the extracts from Ezra's memoirs, to the 1st person used in the memoirs of Nehemiah, is only what we might expect.

For superscriptions introduced by editorial hands, compare Isai. i. 1; Jer. i. 1; Hos. i. 1; Am. i. 1; Mic. i. 1. This, however, is the only superscription of the kind in an historical book.

Hachaliah] R.V. **Hacaliah**, cf. x. 1. The father's name enables us to distinguish Nehemiah from the men of the same name mentioned in Ezra ii. 2; Neh. iii. 16. The name Hacaliah does not occur elsewhere in the O.T.

We are not told what tribe Nehemiah belonged to. Some have supposed the tribe of Levi; and in favour of this suggestion should be observed (*a*) the mention of his 'brother' Hanani's appointment (vii. 2) along with the appointment of the porters, singers, and Levites; (*b*) the prominent consideration paid by Nehemiah to the interests of the priests and Levites.

Others have suggested the tribe of Judah, and in support of their view refer to the mention of his 'house' (i. 6).

I. 1 *b*—II. 11. Nehemiah's Commission.

1 *b*—4. The Evil Tidings from Jerusalem.

1 *b*. *And*] R.V. **Now**. See note on Ezra i. 1. The copula implies that something has preceded. The Memoirs of Nehemiah did not open with these words. The Chronicler only gives us extracts (i. 1 *b*—vii. 73 *a*, xii. 27—43, xiii. 4—31). The retention of the copula at the beginning of the section shows that there was no intention to conceal the fragmentary character of the section.

Chisleu] R.V. **Chislev**. See note on Ezra x. 9. Hanani's arrival was in the winter, some three or four months before the events narrated in ii. 1 ff.

in *the twentieth year*] R.V. marg. 'see ch. ii. 1.' In ch. ii. 1 we find that the events described in the beginning of that chapter are said to have taken place in the month Nisan, in the 20th year of king Artaxerxes. Now Nisan is the first month, Chislev the ninth month in the year. How then comes it that in this verse the events of the ninth month seem to precede those of the first month, in the 20th year of Artaxerxes?

(*a*) The explanation usually given is that Nehemiah employs the post-exilic calendar, in which Tisri (the seventh month) opens the sacred Jewish year, Chislev being then the third and Nisan the seventh months.

asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem. And 3

The objections, however, to this explanation are considerable:

(1) There is nothing in the context, here or in ii. 1, to cause Nehemiah to employ a sacred in preference to a civil computation. As he reckons the year by the reign of the Persian king, and employs the Babylonian (not the old Hebrew) names of months, we should expect him to adopt the calendar in vogue in the Persian dominion.

(2) The custom of reckoning Nisan as the first and Chislev as the ninth month in the year was almost universal in Western Asia.

(3) In post-exilic Jewish writings we find this method of computing the months employed with reference to sacred and secular matters indifferently (cf. Zech. i. 7, vii. 1; Esth. ii. 16, iii. 7, 13, viii. 9, ix. 1; 1 Macc. iv. 52, x. 21, xvi. 14, 2 Macc. xv. 36).

(4) The system of reckoning the 1st of Tisri, the Feast of Trumpets, as New Year's Day is to be dated, according to Jewish tradition, either from the age of Alexander the Great, or, more probably, from the time of the adoption of the Seleucid era (312 B.C.). (The theory which connects it with the restoration of the daily burnt-offering 'on the first day of the seventh month' Ezra iii. 6, cf. Neh. viii. 11, rests on no foundation.) Even where reference is made to 'the Feast of Trumpets,' the feast is stated to occur in the seventh month (see Lev. xxiii. 24, 25; Num. xxix. 1).

In the opinion of some scholars (e.g. Wellhausen, *Hist. of Isr.* p. 109) the Hebrew year was reckoned from autumn to autumn until the Exile, and then the influence of the Babylonian usage caused a change from autumn to spring to take place. There are some indications of an early Israelite practice of reckoning the year from autumn to autumn (Ex. xxiii. 16, xxxiv. 22; Lev. xxv. 22, cf. Gen. vii. 11); and Josephus (*Ant.* i. 1, 3) says this was altered by Moses, in order that the year might date from the month in which the Exodus occurred. But the impression produced by the narrative of the regal period (see 2 Sam. xi. 1; 1 Kings xx. 22, 26; Jer. xxxvi. 9, 22) is in favour of the mode of reckoning from spring to spring. It seems on every account more probable, that Nehemiah would follow the numeration of months, starting from the month Nisan, which both his countrymen and the people, among whom he lived, commonly employed.

(*b*) Another explanation has been given, that the years of Artaxerxes' reign were not reckoned, as calendar years, from the month Nisan, but from the month in which he ascended the throne: if therefore his reign began in any one of the months between Nisan and Chislev (i.e. Iyyar, Sivan, Tammuz, Ab, Elul, Tisri, Marcheswan), Chislev would precede Nisan in the year so calculated. But for this view there is no evidence from other sources.

(*c*) It is better to acknowledge that we have here a contradiction, and to suppose that a mistake has been made either by the Compiler or by a scribe, who was anxious that the extract from Nehemiah's writings should open with the mention of a date, and inserted, from ch. ii. 1, the year of the king's reign, not perceiving the difficulty to

they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province *are* in great affliction and reproach:

which it would give rise. The omission of the king's name is an additional reason for suspecting an error in the text.

Shushan] Shushan or Susa, after its capture by Cyrus (546?), became 'the principal capital of the Persian Empire, and its river, the Choaspes, a branch of the Eulaeus (Ulai, Dan. viii. 2, 16), had the honour of supplying the (Persian) kings with the only drinking water they would use' ('The Story of the Nations:' *Media*, p. 318). "The city of Susa was cut in two by a wide river, known at present under the name of Ab-Kharkha (ancient Choaspes). On the right bank were the populous quarters; on the left, temples, or at least a Ziggurat, the royal city, the citadel, and the palace, the ruins of which, entombed in an immense earth-mound, rise in the midst of the other lesser mounds, like a steep islet from the sea." (*id.* pp. 333 f.)

Shushan had formerly been the capital of the kingdom of Elam, whose territory had embraced the alluvial plain E. of the lower Tigris, and stretched S. along the shores of the Persian Gulf (*Kiepert*). For a mention of the early Elamite kingdom see the reference in Gen. xiv. 1 ff. to the invasion of Chedor-laomer (Kudur-lagamer). In the Assyrian Inscriptions of Assur-bani-pal, king of Assyria (668—626), we have an extraordinarily vivid and minute account of that monarch's two campaigns against the kingdom of Elam. Few, if any, of the treasures of the Assyrian Rooms in the British Museum exceed in dramatic interest, vigour of treatment, and beauty of preservation, the representation, on three slabs (nos. 45—47) in the Kouyunjik Gallery, of the overthrow and death, by the banks of Eulaeus, of Teumman, king of Elam. Assur-bani-pal entered Shushan with his victorious army and carried away enormous treasure. The city was sacked and its fortifications destroyed. Elam as a kingdom ceased to exist. Shushan however rose from its ashes. Darius Hystaspes rebuilt the city and erected there a magnificent palace. This was destroyed by fire. But on its site Artaxerxes built another and yet more splendid residence. The remnants of 'a magnificent piece of painted and glazed tiles representing striding lions, which formed the decoration of the pillared porticos' (Ragozin's *Media*) have been discovered; and along it ran an inscription on which appears the name of Artaxerxes. This was probably the palace in which Nehemiah attended the king as cupbearer.

It became the usual winter residence of the Persian kings, who made use of Ecbatana for their summer quarters. The importance of the town caused the whole district to be called 'Susiana' in the Macedonian period. After its capture by the Mahommedans it sank gradually into decay. The modern town of Dizfûl stands near the site of Shushan. Other passages of Scripture which make mention of Shushan (Dan. viii. 2; Esth. *passim*) point to the fact that a large number of Jews resided in the city.

the palace] R.V. marg. *the castle.* The word 'bîrah' is used here,

the wall of Jerusalem also *is* broken down, and the gates thereof are burnt with fire. 4 And it came to pass, when I

in Dan. viii. 2, and in Esther, as an appellation of Shushan. It is applied in 1 Chron. xxix. 1, 19 to the Temple at Jerusalem; in Neh. ii. 8, vii. 2, to the 'capitol' or 'castle' of Jerusalem. In Ezra vi. 2 (Aram.) it is used of Ecbatana. It means something more than 'the royal house of residence,' for which we have 'palace' (=bîthan) (Esth. i. 5, vii. 7, 8) or 'the king's house' (Esth. ii. 8, iv. 13). It is probably a special title of Shushan, denoting it as a stronghold as well as a royal city.

The Vulgate here renders by 'castro': the LXX. transliterates (ἀβιρά).

2. *Hanani, one of my brethren*] Cf. vii. 2 'my brother Hanani,' where the context places it beyond all doubt that the word 'brother' is not to be understood in the sense of 'fellow-countryman.' But 'brother' may mean 'cousin' or 'relative,' cf. Gen. xiv. 16, xxiv. 48; and we find 'brethren' used for 'fellow-tribesmen' in 2 Sam. xix. 12; Neh. iii. 1. The term 'one of my brethren' favours the explanation that Hanani was a relative, not his actual brother.

certain *men of Judah*] R.V. **certain men out of Judah.** The R.V. gives the truer rendering of the preposition. The emphasis does not lie upon the men being Jews, but upon their having just come from Judea.

the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity] i.e. the Jews in the land of Judea as distinguished from those in Babylon and dispersed in other countries. They are described as refugees, or as the children of refugees, who had survived the captivity; cf. Ezr. iii. 8, viii. 35; Neh. viii. 17.

'that had escaped,' one word in the Hebrew, the same abstract substantive as in Ezr. ix. 15, 'A remnant that is escaped.'

'the captivity,' not collectively 'the captives,' abstract for concrete like 'hag-gôlah' (Ezr. ii. 1), but descriptively, 'the scene or condition of captivity' (sh'bhî).

and concerning Jerusalem] Nehemiah's anxious enquiry relates to two things, the welfare of the people and the condition of the city. He does not ask about the Temple.

3. The reply of the Jews corresponds to the enquiry, and is given in two sentences, the one relating to the inhabitants, the other to the walls and defences of Jerusalem.

in the province] See note on Ezra ii. 1.

great affliction and reproach] Compare the description in ii. 17 and the sarcasms of Sanballat in iv. 2, 3. This 'affliction and reproach' is something quite distinct from the humiliation of being subject to foreign rulers, as in ix. 37. The 'affliction' denotes 'the evil plight' within the walls; the 'reproach,' the scornful attitude of enemies without. Cf. Ps. lxxix. 4—9, 'we are become a reproach to our neighbours, &c....; for we are brought very low,' and lxxxix. 38—46.

*the wall...*is *broken down*] Speaking of the wall, the Jews describe

heard these words, *that* I sat down and wept, and mourned *certain* days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of

its present condition; speaking of the gates, they refer to a past event. For the condition of 'the wall,' cf. ii. 13. 'Broken down': in order to deprive a walled city of its power of resistance, a victorious enemy used to make breaches in the walls at one or more vulnerable points. Cf. 2 Kings xiv. 13 (2 Chron. xxxii. 5).

the gates...are burnt with fire) cf. ii. 13. 'The gates,' as in Jer. xvii. 27, are the fortified gateways, the principal objects of assault. The verb here is in the past tense, and alludes to an historical event, not to a long-standing condition.

It has been commonly supposed that the Jews are informing Nehemiah of the condition in which the walls and gates of Jerusalem had been lying ever since the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, 143 years previously (588); and Rashi points out that the walls and gates are mentioned and not the Temple, because the Temple had been rebuilt, and 'the walls' and 'the gates' remained in ruins. But this explanation is not sufficient. (1) If Nehemiah's brethren informed him of a condition of things which had continued ever since the return from the Captivity, we fail to see any reason for the vehement consternation into which he was thrown. (2) As a reply to an enquiry concerning the condition of Jerusalem, we should not expect the words 'the gates...are burned with fire,' relating to so distant an event as the Chaldean overthrow. (3) The verb 'are burned' seems to denote a recent event = 'have been burned.'

It is more natural to suppose that Nehemiah's brethren inform him of a recent catastrophe at Jerusalem. It is a probable conjecture that they refer to a forcible interference, on the part of Samaritan foes, with some recent attempt of the Jews, perhaps led by Ezra, to rebuild their walls. This may be the failure described in Ezr. iv. Artaxerxes' decree of prohibition was, we may well imagine, followed up by hostile action, on the part of the enemies of the Jews, by the demolition of the wall, so far as it had been built, and by the destruction of the gates.

Nehemiah, a leading Jew at the court, would have been made acquainted both with the project of rebuilding the wall and with the fact of Artaxerxes having prohibited it. Hence his anxious enquiry about the people beset with foes, and about the city whose defences were in danger. The Temple, on the other hand, had long been rebuilt with the sanction of the Persian king, Darius. There was no apprehension to be felt on its behalf.

The news which he receives at first overwhelms Nehemiah with dismay. He connects in his mind the religious and national independence of his people with a strong and fortified Jerusalem. For the moment his hopes for his people seem to be shattered at a blow.

4. *I sat down and wept*] Cf. Ezr. ix. 3 'sat down astonied,' Ps. cxxxvii. 1 'we sat down and wept.' Nehemiah's sudden grief shows that the information brought by his 'brethren' was unexpected.

mourned] A word in the original used especially for formal lamen-

heaven, and said, I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven, 5
the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy

tation, e.g. over the dead, Gen. xxxvii. 35, or on account of sin, viii. 9; Ezr. x. 6; Dan. x. 2.

certain *days*] R.V. **certain days.** Literally 'days,' sometimes used to denote a short indefinite period, cf. xiii. 6; it is rendered 'a season' in Gen. xl. 4, 'many days,' 1 Kings xvii. 15.

fasted, and prayed] Cf. Ezr. viii. 23.

before the God of heaven] See note on Ezr. i. 2. The use of this Divine title in Nehemiah's writings is of especial interest, on account of the frequency with which it occurs in Persian inscriptions. It is not merely to be understood as an abridged form of the title of universal sovereignty, 'God of heaven and earth,' but rather as indicating that the Almighty dwelt in the heaven of heavens beyond the visible sky, cf. Ps. cxv. 16.

'before:' literally 'in the presence of.' This expression has sometimes been understood by commentators to denote 'turning with the face towards Jerusalem,' as in Dan. vi. 10, 11. But it is too general to admit of such a limitation (cf. 1 Sam. i. 12).

5—11. NEHEMIAH'S PRAYER.

This prayer falls into five portions: (1) the opening address, ver. 5; (2) the humble approach, ver. 6 *a*; (3) the confession of sins, vv. 6 *b*, 7; (4) the appeal to the Divine Promise, vv. 8—10; (5) the closing supplication for (*a*) the people, and (*b*) Nehemiah as their representative at the royal court, ver. 11.

Points of resemblance may be noted with the prayer of Ezra (Ezr. ix. 5—15), and, in particular, with that of Daniel (Dan. ix. 4—19). The opening words (ver. 5), which are almost word for word the same as we find in Dan. ix. 4 (the only variations being 'Adonai' for 'Jehovah' and the additional title 'God of heaven'), were very probably a recognised formula of prayer based on the language of Deuteronomy.

5. The opening address blends the Divine attributes of might and majesty with those of faithfulness and mercy. Divine *forgiveness* alone could vouchsafe the restoration, which Divine *power* alone could effect.

I beseech thee, O LORD God of heaven] R.V. **O LORD, the God of heaven.** See on Ezra i. 2.

'I beseech thee.' (Vulg. quaeso). In the original one strong supplicatory word, 'anah,' used also in ver. 11; 2 Kings xx. 3; Ps. cxvi. 4, cxviii. 25; Isa. xxxviii. 3; Jon. i. 14.

On 'the God of heaven' see note on ver. 4.

the great and terrible God] This phrase, as in Dan. ix. 4, with its use of the Divine name 'Êl' is derived from Deut. vii. 21 (x. 17). See the very similar expressions in chap. iv. 14, ix. 32.

God in the manifestation of His strength (Êl) is 'terrible.' Cf. Ps. xlvii. 2, lxvi. 3, lxviii. 35, xcix. 3. For the fear which Jehovah inspires cf. Isai. viii. 13; Jer. v. 22; Mal. i. 6.

that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe

6 for them that love him and observe his commandments: let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that *thou* mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy

(R.V. keep) *his commandments*] The reciprocity of the covenant relation, denoted by the use of the same Hebrew word for 'keeping' 'covenant and mercy' as for keeping commandments, is thus brought out in the R. V. The sentence which is borrowed from Deut. vii. 9, cf. v. 12, is also found in 1 Kings viii. 23; Neh. ix. 32; Dan. ix. 4, in each case, as here, being made use of in a prayer.

'Keepeth covenant and mercy,' a condensed phrase for 'keepeth covenant and sheweth mercy.' On the Divine side, the keeping of the covenant consisted in shewing 'mercy.' God will not break His covenant, cf. Judg. ii. 1; Ps. lxxxix. 34.

'for them that love him and keep his commandments,' as in Exod. xx. 6; Deut. v. 10. One class is described in motive and act. The love of those who are in covenant with the Lord is shown in obedience. Compare the New Covenant, 'if ye love me keep my commandments' (John xiv. 15). 'Love to God,' in the Pentateuch, is only expressed in Ex. xx. 6 and in Deuteronomy (v. 10, vi. 5, vii. 9, x. 12, xi. 1, 13, 22, xiii. 3, xix. 9, xxx. 6, 16, 20); it is found in the historical books, Jos. xxii. 5, xxiii. 11; Jud. v. 31; 1 Kings iii. 3: in the Psalms, Ps. xviii. 1, xxxi. 23, xcvii. 10, cxvi. 1, cxlv. 20 (v. 11, lxix. 36, cxix. 132). Elsewhere in the O.T. the thought of love to God is hardly directly found except in the parallel passage Dan. ix. 4, and less definitely in Isai. lvi. 6; Mal. ii. 11.

It is as if the writers of the O.T. shrank from expressing the thought of devotion to God by a term familiarly used of human friendship and earthly affection. The relation of sinful man to the Almighty was that of the subject to the sovereign, of the servant to the master. Devotion was realized in obedience to His law.

6. The humble access leading to the confession of sin.

let thine ear now be attentive] The word 'attentive' is not very common in the original. It occurs again in ver. 11, in Ps. cxxx. 2. And with the rendering 'attent' (A.V. and R.V.) in 2 Chron. vi. 40, vii. 15. The LXX. renders προσεχον.

and thine eyes open] We should expect this clause to come first, as in 2 Chron. vi. 40 and vii. 15. We need not however supply the words 'to the misery of thy people' or 'to him that prayeth.' A similar passage in 1 Kings viii. 52, 'that thine eyes may be open unto the supplication of thy servant,' shows that the metaphor is not to be pressed too literally.

hear] R.V. **hearken unto.** An alteration due to the wish to give the full force of the Hebrew. 'Thy servant.' Compare 1 Sam. iii. 9, 10, xxiii. 10; 2 Sam. vii. 20.

now, day and night] R.V. **at this time, day and night.** Literally, 'this day, day and night,' cf. ver. 11. 'At this time' then refers to the

servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned. We have dealt very corruptly against 7
thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses. Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou 8
commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, *If* ye transgress, I

'certain days' mentioned in ver. 4: it does not mean that he went into the presence of the king on the day of this prayer.

The Vulgate 'hodie nocte et die.' Cf. Acts xx. 31 'night and day with tears.'

for the children of Israel thy servants] i.e. in their behalf. In spite of their sin and disobedience, the children of Israel are still God's servants, cf. Levit. xxv. 55; Isai. lxiii. 17. The exact phrase used here does not occur elsewhere. But the permanent ideal relation, in spite of all failure or rebellion, is frequently expressed in the prophets; cf. 'Jacob, my servant,' used in Isaiah (xli. 8, xliv. 2 &c.), Jeremiah (xxx. 10, xlvi. 27, 28), Ezekiel xxxvii. 25.

and confess] R.V. **while I confess**. The A.V. is not grammatical.

'Confess.' See on Ezr. x. 1.

the sins of the children of Israel, which we &c.] Nehemiah identifies himself with the guilt of the people. Cf. Moses in Ex. xxxiv. 9 'Pardon our iniquity and our sin.'

both I and my father's house] i.e. Neither the individual nor the family being free from the responsibility of national sin. It has been remarked that, if Nehemiah belonged to the house of David, there would be a special appropriateness in these words. According to one tradition (Euseb.), he was of the tribe of Judah.

7. *We have dealt very corruptly*] The words in the original occasion some difficulty. There is however no connexion, as commentators have supposed, between the Hebrew words used here and a similar root meaning 'a pledge.' The Vulgate, adopting a different derivation, has 'vanitate seducti sumus.' The LXX. rendering διαλύσει διελύσαμεν πρὸς σὲ and that of a few MSS. ματαιώσει ἐματαιώθημεν ἐν σοί (Field's Orig. Hex.) show the uncertainty as to the meaning. Elsewhere in the O.T. the word occurs in Job xvii. 1; Isai. xiii. 5, xxxii. 7, liv. 16; Prov. xiii. 13; Mic. ii. 10; Cant. ii. 15. The substantive derived from the root here used is rendered 'hurt' Dan. vi. 23. It is found with the same meaning as in this verse Job xxxiv. 31 'I will not offend any more.'

commandments...statutes...judgments] The three words occur together in Deut. v. 31, vi. 1, vii. 11, viii. 11, xi. 1.

which thou commandedst] e.g. Deut. vi. 1.

thy servant Moses] and ver. 8, ix. 18.

'The servant of the Lord' was a favourite title applied to Moses. In Joshua it occurs with great frequency (e.g. i. 1, 2, 7, 13, &c.). Elsewhere it is found in 1 Kings viii. 53, 56; 2 Kings xviii. 12, xxi. 8;

9 will scatter you abroad among the nations: but *if* ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part

2 Chr. i. 3; Ps. cv. 26; Mal. iv. 4. He is called 'the servant of God' in Neh. x. 29; 1 Chr. vi. 49; Dan. ix. 11; 'the man of God' Ezr. iii. 2; 1 Chron. xxiii. 14; Ps. xc. (title). Cf. in the New Testament the description of Moses as the 'faithful servant' in Heb. iii. 2—5, and Rev. xv. 3. The LXX. τῷ Μωυσῇ παιδί σου (Vulg. *famulo tuo*) will illustrate Acts iv. 27 'thy holy Servant Jesus' (τὸν ἅγιον παῖδά σου Ἰησοῦν).

8. *Remember...the word...saying*] The reference here made is in general terms. No passage in the Pentateuch exactly agrees with it (cf. x. 34). This may be shown by the words used in the first sentence. The Hebrew word for 'I will scatter' is only found in Deuteronomy in the Pentateuch: the Hebrew word for 'transgress' only occurs once in Deuteronomy (xxxii. 51), but in quite a different context from the threat of dispersion.

The threat of dispersion is found in the Pentateuch in Lev. xxvi. 33; Deut. iv. 27, xxviii. 64, xxx. 3. The promise of restoration is given in Deut. iv. 29 and in xxx. 4, 5 (Lev. xxvi. 40—42). The passage most resembling the words here given is Deut. xxx. 1—5. On 'transgress,' see note on Ezr. ix. 4.

scatter...abroad among the nations] Cf. Jer. ix. 16; Ezek. xi. 16, xii. 15, xx. 23, xxii. 15, xxxvi. 19.

In the original the position of the personal pronouns is very emphatic, *Ye* transgress, *I* scatter.

For the appeal to the LORD to 'remember,' cf. Ps. cvi. 4.

9. The Promise. The appeal to this promise marks the crisis of the prayer.

if *ye turn*] R.V. **return.** The word, as in Deut. xxx. 2, is stronger than to 'turn'. It denotes a 'return' from a wrong road. The back is turned upon the former wrong direction. Cf. Mal. iii. 18.

and keep my commandments, and do them] R.V. omits comma. These words contain the practical explanation of the 'return.' No distinction can really be drawn between 'keeping' and 'doing' the commandments. The words occur together with great frequency in Deuteronomy, both as 'observe to do' and 'observe (or keep) and do.'

though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, &c.] R.V. **though your outcasts were in the uttermost part of the heaven**, &c. This and the next clauses are clearly taken from Deut. xxx. 4, where the same words (except for the use of the 2nd sing. for the 2nd plur.) occur. The term 'your outcasts' does not occur with this usage elsewhere in the Pentateuch, while the exact phrase '*in* the uttermost part of heaven' also only occurs there. The word 'outcasts' may be illustrated from 2 Sam. xiv. 13, 14; Isai. xvi. 3, 4, xxvii. 13, lvi. 8; Jer. xxx. 17, xlix. 36, and 'the uttermost part of heaven' from Deut. iv. 32 and Jud. vii. 11. But the occurrence here side by side of

of the heaven, *yet* will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there. Now these *are* thy servants and thy people, 10
whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy

these two forms can only be accounted for on the supposition that Nehemiah has here in his thoughts the passage Deut. xxx. 1—4.

On 'gathering the outcasts' compare the title given to the LORD in Isai. lvi. 8, 'The LORD God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel.'

and will bring them] The promise to bring together 'the outcasts' of Israel should be compared with the metaphor of the shepherd and the scattered sheep, in Ezek. xxxiv. 11—18. See especially, ver. 13, 'And I will bring them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land.'

unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there] R.V., **to cause my name to dwell there.** This sentence is again characteristically Deuteronomic. The words, 'the place which the LORD thy God shall choose,' do not occur in the Pentateuch except in the book Deuteronomy, where they are found some 20 times. In five of these passages (xii. 11, xiv. 23, xvi. 6, 11, xxvi. 2) the full phrase is found, 'the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there,' which Nehemiah here quotes.

That 'the place' so designated is Jerusalem and the Temple at Jerusalem is beyond all doubt. This was the place of which God had said 'My name shall be there' (1 Kings viii. 29). At Shiloh God '*caused his name to dwell* at the first' (Jer. vii. 12). But Shiloh passed away. And though Jerusalem for a time seemed threatened with a like fate (Jer. vii. 12—15), the day came when the watchmen upon the hills of Ephraim cried, 'Arise ye and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God' (Jer. xxxi. 6).

The Hebrew verb 'cause to dwell' is that from which came the late Hebrew word 'Shechinah', applied to the visible manifestation in Glory of the Divine Presence.

The association of 'the Name' with the Temple is very frequent in Chronicles (e.g. 1 Chr. xxii. 7—10, 19, xxviii. 3, xxix. 16; 2 Chr. ii. 1, 4, vi. 5—9, 20, 33, 34, 38, vii. 16, 20, xii. 13, xx. 8, 9, xxxiii. 4, 7).

10. This verse states the ground on which the privilege of the promise is claimed.

Now these are *thy servants*, &c.] The connexion of thought, which is not very obvious at first sight, seems to be as follows. Having stated the Divine promise, Nehemiah returns in thought to 'the children of thy servants' of ver. 6. They, by their confession of sin, had fulfilled the condition, they had 'returned' unto their God. They could claim the fulfilment of His promise. They were not aliens. They were His own people whom He Himself had redeemed.

whom thou hast redeemed] Of the two Hebrew words, rendered by the English 'redeem,' i.e. 'ga'al' and 'padah,' the word here used is 'padah.' It is noteworthy that in the similar expression, Exodus

11 strong hand. O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I

vi. 6, 'redeem you with a stretched out arm,' the word 'ga'al' is used, while here, as always in Deuteronomy (vii. 8, ix. 26, xiii. 5, xv. 15, xxi. 8, xxiv. 18), the word 'redeem' is 'padah.' LXX. ἐλυτρώσω; Vulg. *redemisti*. The redemption, here spoken of, looks back, beyond the recent restoration from Babylon, to the original deliverance from Egypt, which sealed for ever the relation between Jehovah and His people.

by thy great power, and by thy strong hand] Nehemiah combines two familiar phrases which do not seem to be elsewhere combined except in Exodus xxxii., 11 'thy people which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand.' Along with 'great power' we frequently find 'a stretched out arm,' as in Deut. ix. 29; 2 Kings xvii. 36; Jer. xxvii. 5, xxxii. 17: and again 'a stretched out arm' following upon 'a strong (or mighty) hand,' as in Deut. iv. 34, v. 15, vii. 19, xi. 2; 1 Kings viii. 42; 2 Chron. vi. 32; Ps. cxxxvi. 12; Jer. xxxii. 21; Ezek. xx. 33, 34.

It is possible that Nehemiah here has the Jehovist Ex. xxxii. 11 in his thoughts. But as the reading there is doubtful, both the Samaritan and the LXX. texts having 'a stretched out arm' instead of 'a mighty hand,' we cannot be confident that we have here a quotation.

The words 'yad hakhezakah' are rendered by the R.V. 'strong hand' here and Ex. iii. 19, vi. 1, xiii. 9; Num. xx. 20; Ps. cxxxvi. 12; Jer. xxxii. 21 (Ezek. xxx. 22), and 'mighty hand' in Ex. xxxii. 11; Deut. iv. 34, v. 15, vi. 21, vii. 8, 19, ix. 26, xi. 2, xxvi. 8, xxxiv. 12; Jos. iv. 24; 1 Kings viii. 42; 2 Chron. vi. 32; Ezek. xx. 33, 34.

11. The special Intercession (*a*) generally, that the prayer of Nehemiah and his countrymen might be heard, (*b*) particularly, that Nehemiah's application to the king might be successful.

O Lord] The Hebrew word 'Adonai' is also used for the Divine name in Neh. (iii. 5) viii. 10, x. 29: see also note on Ezra x. 3.

The use of 'Adonai' by itself as a Divine title is common in poetry and in prophetical writings (e.g. Job xxviii. 28; Ps. xvi. 2, xxxv. 23, xxxvii. 13 &c.; Isai. iii. 17, 18, viii. 7 &c.; Jer. ii. 22; Ezek. xviii. 25, 29; Amos i. 8, v. 16; Mic. i. 2, and in Lamentations chaps. ii. iii. *passim*). It is generally used in prayer or humble address, as in Gen. xviii. 3, 27, 30—32; Ex. iv. 10, 13, v. 22, xxxiv. 9; Num. xiv. 17; Jos. vii. 8; Jud. vi. 15, xiii. 8; 2 Sam. vii. 19; 1 Kings viii. 53; Ps. xxxix. 7, li. 15; Dan. ix. 4, 7, 8, 16, 17, 19.

I beseech thee] see note on ver. 5.

who desire to fear thy name] R.V. **who delight** &c.

The R.V. gives the true rendering. The Hebrew word is more generally used of 'delight in' a person or a thing, e.g. 1 Sam. xix. 2; Ps. xxii. 8, cxii. 1; Isai. i. 11; but it is also found with an infin., e.g. Ps. xl. 8 'I delight to do thy will, O God.' Isai. lviii. 2 'delight to know my ways.' Esth. vi. 6 &c. 'the king delighteth to honour.'

pray thee, thy servant *this* day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer.

'delight to fear.' The union of fear and joy is the paradox of spiritual service. Cf. Ps. ii. 11 'Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling,' xxii. 23 'Ye that fear the LORD praise him.'

thy name] i.e. Thy nature and Thy attributes. As often in the O. T. For 'fear thy name,' comp. Ps. lxxxvi. 11; Mal. iv. 2.

this *day*] The same word as in ver. 6 'at this time,' and to be understood here in the same sense. There is an obvious interval of time between ch. i. and ch. ii.

and grant him mercy] The idiom here employed, literally 'and give him to mercy' occurs with the word here used for 'mercy' (rachamim = 'bowels' or 'mercies,' τὰ σπλάγχνα) in 1 Kings viii. 50; Ps. cvi. 46. The sense strictly is 'and give him over for purposes, or as an object, of mercy and kindness,' just as in iv. 4 'give them up to spoiling' represents an opposite thought.

in the sight of this man] i.e. the king; the final words of the prayer are explained by the parenthetical clause which follows. The word 'this' shows that the prayer was the petition of Nehemiah at the king's court, not necessarily in his presence.

For I was &c.] R.V. **(Now I was, &c.)** The clause in the Hebrew is parenthetical.

the king's cupbearer] R.V. **cupbearer to the king.** The article is wanting before 'cupbearer.' Nehemiah stood in the relation of 'cupbearer' to the Persian king, but there were others holding the same office. Compare the use of the plural, 'cupbearers,' 1 Kings x. 5; 2 Chron. ix. 4; the title of 'chief butler,' i.e. chief of the cupbearers, in Gen. xl., xli; and the title Rab-shakeh (=chief cupbearer) in 2 Kings xviii. 17. This last passage shows the important place occupied at the court by the head of these functionaries. For, although the title probably represents the Assyrian '*Rab-sak*'='Generalissimo,' the Hebrew transliteration of it, based on the similarity of sound, conveyed the idea of 'chief cupbearer' to Hebrew readers, and presupposed his prominence among the ministers of an Oriental king.

A good representation of the duties of a 'cupbearer' at the Persian court is given by Xenophon (*Cyrop.* i. 3, 4). See note on ii. 1.

The majority of such attendants at an Oriental court were eunuchs. We must certainly admit the probability that the Jews who occupied places of distinction at the court like Nehemiah, Daniel and his companions (Dan. i. 7), Mordecai (Esth. ii. 5, 19, &c.), Zerubbabel (1 Esdr. iii. 14, iv. 13), belonged to this class. The words of consolation addressed by the Prophet of the Exile (Is. lvi. 4, 5) to pious Jews, who according to the strict letter of the law were excommunicate, were applicable to such cases.

LXX. οἰνοχόος: Vulg. pincerna. The old Rabbinic explanation of the word 'Tirshatha,' as equivalent to 'cupbearer' and therefore applied to Nehemiah, is an illustration of obsolete methods of derivation (see Ezr. ii. 63).

2 And it came to pass in the month Nisan, *in* the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, *that* wine *was* before him: and

II. 1—11. Nehemiah receives His Commission.

1. *Nisan*] See note on i. 1. This name only occurs elsewhere in the O.T. in Esther iii. 7, 'in the first month, which is the month Nisan,' cf. Josephus, *Ant.* xi. 4, 8, 'The first month, which according to the Macedonians is called Xanthicus, but according to us Nisan.' Its meaning is uncertain; according to some its root-idea is 'fruitfulness,' according to others 'beginning' or 'origin.' It corresponds to the month of which the older Israelite name was 'Abib' (Ex. xiii. 4, xxiii. 15, xxxiv. 18; Deut. xvi. 1), 'the harvest month,' equivalent to our latter part of March and beginning of April.

The same month appears in the Assyrian dialect as Nisannu, and it is quite possible that the Jews may have adopted the name from Babylonian usage.

the twentieth year of Artaxerxes] 445 B.C.: Artaxerxes reigned 41 years (465—424 B.C.). In the year 445 Pericles had obtained control of Athenian affairs; and a thirty years' truce was concluded between Athens and Sparta. At Rome the conflict between patricians and plebeians was being waged; the deposition of the Decemvirs had occurred only four years before.

that *wine*] R.V. **when wine**. The R.V. shows the connexion of the sentences. The present clause states the occasion, when Nehemiah preferred his request. 'When wine was before him;' i.e. when the king was at a repast, and the cupbearers were (or a cupbearer was) in attendance. At such a time the king would naturally remark upon any alteration of demeanour in a favourite 'cupbearer.'

According to Rawlinson (*Ancient Monarchies*, vol. iii. p. 214) the Persian king himself rarely dined with his guests. For the most part he dined alone. Sometimes he admitted to his table the queen and two or three of his children. Sometimes at a 'banquet of wine' (Esth. vii. 2) a certain number of privileged boon companions were received.

before him] Another reading is found in the LXX. 'before me,' (καὶ ἦν ὁ οἶνος ἐνώπιον ἐμοῦ), which is followed in the Arabic version and was known to the translators of the Syriac. The change needed in the Hebrew to give this rendering is very slight, being only the omission of a single letter (*vaw*), which is read once instead of being repeated (*l'phānâ(y) vaessa* instead of *l'phānâv vaessa*). It has been very ingeniously maintained that this is the right reading, and that the words 'when wine was before me' denote 'when my turn came round to attend as cupbearer at the royal table.' According to this explanation, the clause accounts for the delay of three or four months, before Nehemiah made his appeal to the king; it also accounts for the king not having before recognised the sadness of his cupbearer, this being the first occasion on which he had appeared in the royal presence since the sad news arrived in the month Chislev.

But it does not seem likely that a cupbearer, who enjoyed the favour of the king, should have appeared so rarely in his presence as this

I took up the wine, and gave *it* unto the king. Now I had not been *beforetime* sad in his presence. Wherefore the 2

view supposes. The LXX. reading makes practically no distinction in meaning between the clauses 'wine was before me' and 'I took up the wine,' and it is a pure assumption, that the former was a phrase for the rotation of the cupbearer's office.

On the other hand, the Hebrew text gives with great minuteness the full circumstances of the event: (1) the month and year; (2) the time of day, at the dinner; (3) the stage at the dinner, when the cupbearer offered the king wine. It distinguishes between 'wine...before him,' the occasion of the repast, and 'I took up...the wine,' the act of presenting the royal cup.

and I took up] R.V. **that I took up.** The cupbearer's duties were to pour out the wine, to taste it so as to prevent any scheme of poisoning, and to present it to the king. Perhaps the words 'took up' relate to the reverential gesture with which the goblet was offered.

the wine] 'The vines of Helbon were cultivated for the special purpose of supplying the Persian king with wine' (Rawlinson, *Anc. Mon.*, iii. p. 226). Helbon, a village near Damascus (see Ezek. xxvii. 18), seems to be the place intended by Strabo and Athenaeus, who call it 'Chalybon.'

Now I had not been beforetime *sad in his presence*] These words have given rise to considerable difficulty. There is nothing to show that this was the first occasion on which Nehemiah had stood before the king since the month Chislev. To suppose that the king had been absent for several months from Shushan would of course get over the difficulty. But we have no evidence upon which to base such an assertion. The passage, as it stands, suggests that Nehemiah was performing his usual duties as on former days. If so, how are we to explain Nehemiah's words? For surely we may suppose his sadness to have dated from the arrival of the distressing news (ch. i. 2).

Various explanations of the words have been attempted; e.g.,

(1) 'Now I was not evil in his sight,' i.e. he was well disposed to me. The rendering 'evil' instead of 'sad' is equally in accordance with the Hebrew, but the use of the same adjective in the sense of 'sad' in verse 2 (see note) is fatal to this interpretation.

(2) 'To suppose that I should not have been sad in his presence!' Grammatically possible, an exclamation is not a probable turn of the sentence.

(3) 'And I was not sad in his presence.' The preterite tense is understood to refer to this particular occasion, and not generally to past time. This interpretation supposes that Nehemiah did *not* wear a sad countenance, but that the quick eye of his royal master perceived that something was wrong with his favourite. This, it is claimed, would account for the perturbation of Nehemiah described in ver. 2. But it is sufficient to object that (*a*) ver. 2, leaves us to suppose that Nehemiah's sadness was clearly visible; (*b*) the 1st pers. sing. of the preterite of the auxiliary is used in three other passages in this book and refers to past time indefinitely (i. 1, 11, xiii. 6). Had Nehemiah

king said unto me, Why *is* thy countenance sad, seeing thou *art* not sick? this *is* nothing *else* but sorrow of heart.
3 Then I was very sore afraid, and said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' sepulchres, *lieth*

wished to say that he was not sad on this occasion he would not have employed the auxiliary at all.

(4) Accepting the English rendering, 'Now I had not been *beforetime* sad in his presence,' it seems necessary to assume that Nehemiah chose his opportunity and deliberately gave occasion for the king's enquiry. It was forbidden for royal servants to appear before the king gloomy and unhappy. It was ill-omened, and suggested discontent and plotting at the court, cf. Esth. iv. 2. Nehemiah had not therefore beforetime been sad in the king's presence. He had not made up his mind up to this time what steps to take or what petition to present. Now, however, after his prayer to God (ch. i. 5—11), he had been able to resolve upon his course of action. He appeared before the king at the banquet table in a state of sadness and dejection, which could not possibly escape the king's notice when he stood before him as cupbearer and presented him the cup.

2. *Wherefore*] R. V. **And.**

sad] The Hebrew adjective which means literally 'bad' is used constantly in this sense, just as we speak of 'bad news' when we mean 'sad news.' For this usage cf. Gen. xl. 7 'sadly,' Prov. xxv. 20 'an heavy heart.'

sorrow of heart] The substantive, being derived from the same root as the adjective 'sad,' had better have been rendered 'sadness,' to bring out the antithesis between 'countenance' and 'heart.' It is so rendered in Eccles. vii. 3, 'the sadness of the countenance.'

Then I was very sore afraid] See note on ver. 1. Nehemiah's fear was very natural. The long-expected and dreaded moment had come, on which he was to plead his people's cause. Their destiny and perhaps his own life depended upon his success. The capricious temper of Persian kings was well known. Artaxerxes may very probably have been prejudiced against the Jews by such complaints as had occasioned the disastrous edict of Ezr. iv. 17—22.

3. *Let the king live for ever*] For this formula opening an address to a king see Dan. ii. 4, iii. 9. Cf. 1 Kings i. 31.

why should not my countenance be sad?] i.e. how could it be otherwise than sad?

the place of my fathers' sepulchres] 'the place,' literally 'the house:' compare 1 Sam. xxv. 1; 1 Kings ii. 34, where Samuel and Joab are said to have been buried each 'in his own house.' This is explained by comparing 2 Kings xxi. 18, 'Manasses...was buried in the garden of his own house,' with 2 Chron. xxxiii. 20, 'they buried him (Manasses) in his own house.' Rich families had their own private places of sepulture (rock-hewn tombs, caves and the like). Nehemiah's words would be particularly appropriate if he was, as some have supposed, a descendant

waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire? Then 4
the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request?
So I prayed to the God of heaven. And I said unto the 5
king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found
favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah,
unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it.

of the royal house. The tombs of David and the kings of Jerusalem seem to have been cut out of the rock on the S. side of the Ophel hill, cf. iii. 16.

consumed] Literally 'eaten up,' as in ver. 13. The more usual phrase is 'burned,' as in i. 3, ii. 17.

4. *For what dost thou make request*] See Esth. iv. 8, vii. 1, 7. The king is favourable, and asks how he can render assistance.

So I prayed] Literally, 'And I prayed'. Nehemiah instantaneously turns from the great king of Persia to the King of kings. The simplicity with which Nehemiah narrates this little incident of his momentary ejaculatory prayer adds wonderfully to the vividness of the scene. For Nehemiah's habit of recourse to prayer see ch. iv. 4, 9, v. 19, vi. 9, 14, xiii. 14.

It is not easy to parallel this act of ejaculatory prayer from the Old Testament. In the New Testament we turn to the examples of our Lord, e.g. John xi. 41, xii. 27; Luke xxiii. 34; and St Stephen, Acts vii. 60.

The object of his prayer is doubtless for wisdom to make his request aright and for a favourable assent from the king. He could not but expect that the king would be startled by the magnitude of a request, first to nominate his cupbearer as the royal commissioner at Jerusalem, and then to empower him to rebuild its walls and defences.

5. *If it please the king, and if thy servant*, &c.] A double conditional sentence precedes the request. On the king's approbation of the policy and on the king's personal favour to Nehemiah must depend the issue.

The words run literally, 'If it is good before the king and if thy servant be good in thy presence.' The phrase in the first clause is the same as that used, e.g. in Esth. i. 19, ix. 13. The second clause differs from the common phrase 'to find favour or grace,' e.g. 1 Sam. xvi. 22; Esth. ii. 15. The verb which with this meaning is generally used impersonally, here has a subject; elsewhere this construction is unusual, cf. Esth. v. 14, 'the thing pleased Haman;' Eccles. vii. 26, 'whoso pleaseth God,' literally, 'is good in the presence of God.'

that I may build it] If, as is most probably the case, Ezra iv. 7—24 refers to the events of the reign of Artaxerxes, Nehemiah in alluding to the city of Jerusalem introduces a subject that had some time previously engaged the king's attention. According to the letters in that chapter the work of 'building' the city had been stopped. But the decree, which had stopped the work, also contemplated the possibility of its being resumed: see Ezr. iv. 21, 'Make ye now a decree to cause these men to cease and that this city be not builded until a decree shall be made by me.' Nehemiah makes request that such a decree should be made.

6 And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him
7 a time. Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river,
8 that they may convey me over till I come into Judah; and a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he

The knowledge of this previous edict would have increased his apprehensions. 'Build' in this passage is equivalent to 'building the walls,' cf. Ezra iv. 12, 16.

6. The account is very condensed. Nehemiah's request is favourably received, but only the general results of the conversation are related. The king seems at once to have appointed Nehemiah to be 'governor' at Jerusalem (cf. v. 14), and to have approved the policy of restoring the walls.

the queen] The royal consort (cf. Ps. xlv. 10; Dan. v. 2, 3, 23) the head of the Harem. She may possibly have been Damaspia, who is mentioned by the historian Ctesias as the consort of Artaxerxes.

sitting by him] It was clearly not a public banquet (cf. Esth. i.). The position of the queen sitting by or before the king corresponds with representations in the monuments. Compare especially the representation of Assurbanipal *reclining* at a banquet, his queen being *seated* on a chair at the foot of his couch (Brit. Mus.).

and I set him a time] The duration of this period is not stated. And the length of Nehemiah's first residence in Jerusalem has been much disputed, some holding that he returned to the king's court immediately after the completion of the walls, others saying that he remained as governor (cf. v. 14) for twelve years, having obtained an extension of the time of absence originally agreed upon.

7. *letters*] see note on Ezra iv. 8.

the governors beyond the river] The 'Pekhahs' of the province on the west bank of the Euphrates (Ezra viii. 36). A reference to Ezra iv. 7—10, 17 shows the importance of securing the recognition of these provincial governors.

convey me over...into Judah] R.V. **let me pass through...unto Judah.** Letters of safe conduct through their territory. The governors would not be asked to assist the journey, but to secure that Nehemiah should not be hindered or molested on the way.

8. *Asaph the keeper of the king's forest*] R.V. marg. 'or *park*'. The forest or park from which the timber was to be supplied has been identified by some with the forests of Lebanon, by others with the well-wooded 'plain' abounding in olives and sycomores (1 Chron. xxvii. 28) near the coast. In the present day scholars incline to identify it with 'Solomon's Garden' at Etan or Etam, described by Josephus (*Ant.* VIII. 7.3) as richly wooded and well watered (παραδείσοις...καὶ ναμάτων ἐπιρροαῖς ἐπιτερπὲς ὁμοῦ καὶ πλούσιον) distant about six or seven miles S. from Jerusalem. The 'pleasure-grounds' of Solomon may have been handed down as 'royal domains.'

may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which *appertained* to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.

In a scantily-wooded country like Palestine a well-preserved forest would have constituted a valuable piece of property.

The management of the 'timber' was committed to a royal officer, 'the keeper of the king's forest' or 'park.' The name Asaph suggests that 'the keeper' was a Jew, which would favour the view of the forest being not far from Jerusalem.

'forest,' 'park' or 'pleasure-garden.' The Hebrew word "pardês" (Gr. παράδεισος = English 'paradise') is found in the O.T. only in Cant. iv. 13; Eccles. ii. 5. It is said to be of Persian (=Zend *pairidaêza*) origin, signifying an 'enclosure.' It seems to have been used especially of 'the royal parks' or 'enclosed hunting-grounds' of the Persian kings, and in this sense to have been received into Hebrew and Greek literature. It occurs with the meaning of a 'garden' in Ecclus. xxiv. 30, xl. 17, 27, Susann. *passim*. For its technical usage among the Jews for 'the abode of the blest,' see, on Luke xxiii. 43, Lightfoot's *Horae Hebraicae*.

that he may give me timber] Nehemiah asks for timber for the purpose of building (1) the castle or citadel of Jerusalem, (2) the walls generally, (3) his own house of residence as governor.

the gates of the palace which appertained *to the house*] R.V. **the gates of the castle which appertaineth to the house.** The word 'Birah' rendered 'castle' by the R.V. is of foreign, possibly Babylonian origin, and is represented in the Greek by Βᾶρις. See note on i. 1.

The building here referred to was destined to play an important part in the later history of Jerusalem. It lay on the north side of the Temple ('the house'), which it was intended to defend, and with which it communicated. It is not mentioned in xii. 39, and therefore probably lay inside the circuit of the wall. A special officer commanded it (vii. 2) on account of its great importance.

It was rebuilt by the Asmonean princes (1 Macc. xiii. 52), and again by Herod the Great, who gave it the name of 'Antonia,' after his friend and patron Mark Antony. Into this castle St Paul was carried by the Roman soldiers, when they rescued him from the hands of the mob in the Temple precincts (Acts xxi. 37, xxii. 24).

the wall of the city] The timber would be required especially for the gates and for the towers which commanded the gates.

the house that I shall enter into] By this is apparently intended Nehemiah's official residence, where he afterwards so generously entertained, v. 17, 18. The old interpretation which explained it to mean the Temple gives no satisfactory meaning to the words 'that I shall enter into.' Nehemiah was not a priest; and had no right to enter the Temple (see vi. 11).

according to the good hand, &c.] Cf. ver. 18; Ezra vii. 6, viii. 18—22.

9 Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave
them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of
10 the army and horsemen with me. When Sanballat the

9. *the governors beyond the river*] The governors of the provinces W. of the Euphrates. According to Josephus the chief governor of Syria, Phœnicia and Samaria was Adæus (*Ant.* XI. 5. 6). The statement that Nehemiah went to the various 'governors beyond the river' may indicate the line of his journey, of which we are told nothing. The Compiler for brevity's sake has here condensed 'the Memoirs of Nehemiah,' omitting whatever was not directly connected with the purpose of his history. Nehemiah would journey to Babylon, and from Babylon probably to Hamath and Damascus, which as the most important cities in Syria would be the residences of 'governors.' From Damascus he either journeyed along the E. of the Jordan, crossing it at Jericho, or he crossed it by the usual fords south of the Lake of Galilee and visited Samaria on his way to Jerusalem. At Samaria there may very possibly have resided a Persian officer (cf. iv. 2). If Nehemiah took Samaria on his way to Jerusalem, this would account for his mention of Sanballat and Tobiah (ver. 10) before the mention of his arrival at Jerusalem (ver. 11).

had sent...with me] R.V. **had sent with me....** As the king's commissioner Nehemiah was attended by an armed retinue. These royal soldiers placed at his disposal would greatly strengthen the independence of his position at Jerusalem. Nehemiah's progress as governor with an armed escort is in striking contrast to the similar journey of Ezra, who was ashamed to ask for military protection for his large and unarmed company. (Ezr. viii. 22.)

10. *When*] R.V. **And when.**

This is the first mention of the opposition which Nehemiah encountered. The news of his mission quickly spread, although its precise object was not known (cf. *vv.* 12, 16).

Sanballat and Tobiah appear throughout the book as the bitterest foes he had to encounter. 'Sanballat,' or, as perhaps it should be called, Saneballat (LXX. Σαναβαλλὰτ, Josephus Σαναβαλλέτης) is probably an Assyrian name, meaning 'Sin (the moon-god of the Assyrians) giveth life,' just as Nabubalitanni means 'Nebo giveth the life.' The name of the moon-god appears also in Sennacherib='Sin gives many brothers.' Sanballat is distinguished as 'the Horonite,' by which is probably meant 'dweller in Beth-horon,' a town on the borders of Ephraim (Josh. xvi. 3, 5, xviii. 13, xxi. 22; 2 Chron. viii. 5, xxv. 13), about 18 miles N.W. of Jerusalem, upon the main road leading to the plain of the coast. Beth-horon commanded the pass into the mountains. Strategically it was a place of great importance. It is famous for its connexion with the victories of Joshua (Josh. x. 10), of Judas Maccabeus (1 Macc. iii. 15, vii. 39), and as the scene of the overthrow of Cestius Gallus (Joseph. *Bell. J.* II. 19. 8).

Sanballat was evidently one of the leaders of the Samaritan community (see on iv. 2). Some scholars imagine from the frequent

Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard *of it*, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel. So I came to 11

conjunction of his name with that of Tobiah the Ammonite, that Sanballat must have been a Moabite, and that the title 'Horonite' denotes a dweller in 'Horonaim,' a town in Southern Moab, mentioned in Isai. xv. 5; Jer. xlviii. 3, 5, 34, and twice in the Inscription of the Moabite Stone.

Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite] Why Tobiah is called 'the servant' is not clear. It may denote that he once held some position under the Persian governor or under the king. Rawlinson's suggestion that he was Sanballat's secretary and councillor, and had originally been an Ammonite slave, is less probable. He is generally mentioned on an equality with Sanballat, and in Neh. vi. 12, 14, his name stands first. Frequent mention is made of Tobiah's intrigues against the work and authority of Nehemiah. According to some, the termination '-jah' shows him to have been a renegade Jew: cf. Ezra ii. 60; Zech. vi. 10, where the same name occurs. His son's name, Jehohanan (vi. 18), is also compounded of the Jewish Sacred Name.

The race-hatred between the Jews and the Ammonites and Moabites (see xiii. 1, 2) may explain in some degree Tobiah's hostility. But in all probability the Samaritans and the neighbouring nations (Moabites, Ammonites, Arabians, &c.) were combined in the desire to foil any effort made to reinstate Jerusalem in her old position of being the most powerful town in Palestine. The policy of Nehemiah would weaken the neighbouring tribes in proportion as it would strengthen the Jews.

Tobiah may have in some way represented the Ammonites, possibly as governor of their small community, having received the position from the court where he had been a slave (cf. Eccles. x. 6; Lam. v. 8, 'servants rule over us').

it grieved them exceedingly] Cf. the same phrase in Jonah iv. 1.

that there was come a man] R.V. for that, &c.

a man] Contemptuous reference to Nehemiah. His office and position as 'pekhah' not referred to. The Hebrew 'adam,' not 'ish,' is used. For the difference when both occur together, cf. Ps. xlix. 2 ('both low and high'), lxii. 9; Isai. ii. 9, v. 15.

to seek the welfare of] Literally, 'to seek good for.' The phrase is not common; it is the antithesis of 'to seek the hurt' (Esth. ix. 2). In Jerem. xxxviii. 4, 'this man seeketh not the *welfare* of this people, but the hurt,' the word rendered 'welfare' is 'shalom' or 'peace,' here it is 'tōbh,' the good or prosperity.

II. 11—VII. 5. The Commission performed.

II. 11—20. The Work undertaken.

The incidents of this passage may be grouped as follows:

(*a*) **11.** Nehemiah's arrival: (*b*) **12—15,** His preliminary investigation: (*c*) **16—18,** the resolution to undertake the work: (*d*) **19, 20,** Nehemiah and his opponents.

12 Jerusalem, and was there three days. And I arose in the night, I and *some* few men with me; neither told I *any* man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither *was there any* beast with me, save the beast that I
13 rode upon. And I went out by night by the gate of the

11. After his arrival at Jerusalem, Nehemiah waited three days before taking any steps. Ezra had done the same (Ezra viii. 32). It was necessary to rest after the journey, and to interchange the formalities of Eastern courtesy with the principal people of the city.

12. Nehemiah went out 'by night' with only a few attendants. He did not wish to excite the curiosity of the people or to arouse the suspicion of his foes with respect to his intended project.

neither told I any *man*] He preserved a discreet silence, until he had personally formed some estimate of the nature and extent of the work to be undertaken in the rebuilding of the walls. It was also important to have the scheme thoroughly matured, so that upon its announcement he could anticipate objections and forestall opposition by immediate action.

had put] R. V. **put.** The R. V. reproduces the present tense of the original more accurately. The consciousness of the Divine inspiration continued with him. For the expression cf. vii. 5.

at Jerusalem] R. V. **for Jerusalem.** Undoubtedly the right rendering of the preposition here. Nehemiah's project was primarily to renovate Jerusalem and to remove the shame of its position as described in i. 2, 3. It was preeminently work *for* the city.

neither was there any *beast*, &c.] A cavalcade would have attracted notice. Nehemiah probably rode a mule or ass rather than a horse. Riding over rough places by night he would require the most surefooted animal.

13—15. Nehemiah's tour of inspection*.

13. *by the gate of the valley*] R.V. **by the valley gate.** The R.V. rendering is preferable, showing that Nehemiah is not merely defining the position of the gate but is referring to it by its recognised name.

The valley-gate is mentioned again in iii. 13. The king Uzziah according to 2 Chron. xxvi. 9 had fortified this gate with towers. We may safely identify this gate as the chief gate in the western wall of Jerusalem, and as thus corresponding to the modern Jaffa Gate, although very possibly not standing at precisely the same spot. There were two well-known valleys outside the walls of Jerusalem, (1) the 'valley' or 'ravine' (*gai*) of Hinnom or 'the son of Hinnom,' i.e. Gehenna, cf. Josh. xv. 8, xviii. 16; 2 Kings xxiii. 10; 2 Chron. xxviii. 3, xxxiii. 6; Neh. xi. 30; Jer. vii. 31, 32, xix. 6; (2) the 'valley' or

* The Topography of the Walls of Jerusalem, in pre-Maccabean times, remains in great obscurity. The places mentioned in Neh. ii. 13—15, iii., xii. 37—39 cannot as yet be said to have been certainly identified except in one or two instances. So long as those who are best acquainted with the subject, differ widely from one another, we may be content to forbear expressing any decided opinion, until further evidence be brought to light.

valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down,

'brook' or 'watercourse' (*nakhal*) of Kedron. In the present verse the word for 'valley' is '*gai*,' and this fact coupled with the general topographical description here and in iii. 13, shows that 'the valley-gate' was the western gate leading out into the ravine of Hinnom.

Recent investigations, however, have given rise to the supposition that pre-exilic Jerusalem was much smaller in circuit and that the western wall passed down the valley of the Tyropoeon. If so, 'the valley-gate' would be the gate opening into the Tyropoeon, which in those days was a considerable ravine but has since become almost completely choked with accumulations of ruin. According to this view the Tyropoeon is to be identified with the Valley of the Son of Hinnom.

even before the dragon well] R. V. **even towards the dragon's well.** The LXX. misreading the less common word in the Hebrew for 'dragon,' renders *καὶ πρὸς στόμα πηγῆς τῶν συκῶν*. The name is doubtless connected with some sanctuary at this fountain in prehistoric times, when 'living water' was associated with the worship of a deity often represented by a 'dragon.' Prof. Robertson Smith (*Religion of the Semites*, pp. 156, 157) calls attention to 'the connection of *jinns* in the form of dragons or serpents with sacred or healing springs'... 'The river of Coele-Syria, the Orontes, was carved out, according to local tradition, by a great dragon, which disappeared in the earth at its source.' The explanation that the well was so called 'because some curious large watersnake or crocodile was kept in it in Nehemiah's time' may be disregarded as fanciful and improbable.

The identification of the well is uncertain. By some it has been identified with 'En-Rogel,' near 'the serpent's stone,' the stone of Zoheleth (1 Kings i. 9). But see ver. 15. By others it has been identified with 'the fountain of Gihon' (1 Kings i. 33). Neither of these suggestions suits the present verse, from which we gather that 'the dragon fountain stood on the W. or S.W. wall of the city.' If it was a spring in the Tyropoeon Valley, it has long since been choked up. 'The rock-hewn conduit which has been found running along the bed of the Tyropoeon Valley' (Sir Chas. Wilson's *Jerusalem*, p. 113, 1889) may very well have conducted the water from such a spring. The 'serpent,' or Mamilla Pool, lay at the N. end of the modern Hinnom Valley (Joseph. *Bell. Jud.* v. 3. 2).

dung port] R. V. **dung gate.** The A. V. probably introduced the rendering 'port' as an intentional variation. For 'port' as the old English word for 'gate,' compare in the Prayer-book Version Ps. ix. 14, 'within the *ports* of the daughter of Sion.' Shakespeare, *Coriolanus*, i. 7, 'So let the *ports* be guarded' (see *The Bible Word-Book*, by W. Aldis Wright).

The dung-gate was probably so called because the refuse of the town was carried out through this gate. Some scholars suppose this to be the same as 'the gate Harsith' or 'gate of potsherds' mentioned in Jer. xix. 2. It is mentioned also in Neh. iii. 13, 14, xii. 31. The proposal to identify it with the modern 'dung-gate,' the 'Bâb-el-Mughâribe,' is

14 and the gates thereof were consumed with fire. Then I
went on to the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool:
but *there was* no place for the beast *that was* under me to
15 pass. Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed

very natural; but the similarity of the name may be misleading. We might however assume that such a gate would be near the Southern extremity of the city, or at any rate not far from the lowest depression in the neighbourhood of the city.

and viewed the walls, &c.] 'viewed,' that is, 'surveyed,' as in Shakespeare *Hen. V.* II. 4, 'Therefore, I say 'tis meet we all go forth To *view* the sick and feeble parts of France.'—So the Vulg. 'considerabam.'

The Hebrew word, 'shobhêr,' which it translates is very unusual in this sense. It ordinarily means to 'break' or 'burst,' and hence some have rendered 'and broke my way through the walls,' and even 'made my way over the broken fragments;' while the LXX. has καὶ ἤμην συντρίβων ἐν τῷ τείχει Ἱερουσαλήμ. The similar late Hebrew verb 'sabhar,' rendered 'hope' (Esth. ix. 1; Is. xxxviii. 18; Ps. cxix. 166), 'wait' (Ps. civ. 27, cxlv. 15), 'tarry' (Ruth i. 13), is probably only a variant of the word which occurs here. It was the misunderstanding of this word which caused Rashi to suggest in his note on ver. 12 that the object of Nehemiah and his companions was to break down portions of the wall that remained, in order that on the next morning the Jews might the more readily assent to his proposals!

broken down,...consumed with fire] Cf. i. 3, ii. 3. It is uncertain whether the Hebrew text had 'wall' or 'walls.' The LXX. and Latin versions both have the singular (τείχει, *murum*). The traditional Hebrew vocalization favours the plural.

14. *I went on*] Literally 'I crossed' or 'passed over.'

to the gate of the fountain] R.V. **to the fountain gate.** On the disputed identification of 'the fountain gate,' see iii. 15, xii. 37. It seems to have stood almost at the southernmost part of the city, at the mouth of the narrow valley of the Tyropoeon. It derived its name either from its proximity to the waters of 'the only real well at Jerusalem,' now known as Bîr Eyub, 'the well of Job' (probably En-Rogel) 'a little below the junction of the Kidron and Hinnom valleys' (Wilson's *Jerusalem*, p. 104), or from its proximity to Siloam, called by Josephus 'a fountain' (πηγή) in *Bell. Jud.* v. 4. 1.

the king's pool] Probably to be identified with the Pool of Siloam, and here called 'the king's pool' because it adjoined 'the king's garden.' It consisted of an upper and a lower reservoir (Is. vii. 3, xxii. 9, 11; 2 Kings xviii. 17) fed by a subterranean conduit from the waters of Gihon (cf. 2 Kings xx. 20).

there was *no place*] Apparently owing to the ruins of the walls and the steepness of the slope Nehemiah could not continue his investigation, following the line of the wall.

15. *Then went I up*] The tense in the original denotes the gradual progress,

the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and *so* returned. And the rulers knew not whither I 16
went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told *it* to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work. Then said I unto them, Ye 17
see the distress that we *are* in, how Jerusalem *lieth* waste, and the gates thereof are burnt with fire: come, and let us build *up* the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a re-

by the brook] i.e. the 'nakhal' or 'brook' (χείμαρρος) of Kedron. Leaving the ruined line of wall, he goes down to the hollow of the Kedron valley, and proceeds northward 'up' the stream, surveying the remains of the walls that crowned the steep declivity on his left.

and turned back] R.V. **and I turned back.** This word has been taken to mean not a retracing of his steps, but the turn westward in his route, which would lead eventually in the direction from which he had started. After leaving the Kedron valley the journey would not be so difficult, being probably on the more level ground where the ruins had been cleared; or where less destruction had been wrought. The absence of mention of any spot on the N. or N.W. wall has caused others to suppose that Nehemiah 'turned back,' having seen enough, without completing his circuit of the walls. More probably we have here an instance of condensation on the part of the compiler who at this point passes at once to the return journey, without giving us sufficient material to judge whether the complete circuit of the walls was made.

16—18. The Nation's Resolve.

16. *the rulers*] R.V. marg. Or *deputies*. '*S'ganim*' is the title used in Ezr. ix. 2, and in this book (iv. 8, 13, v. 7, vii. 5, xii. 40) for the chief magistrates and officials of the city.

whither I went, or what I did] More literally 'whither I *had* gone and what I *was* doing.'

neither had I as yet told it] i.e. the prospect of rebuilding the walls.

the Jews...the work] A remarkable division of the inhabitants of Jerusalem: 'the Jews' here are the great mass of the lay population, as distinguished from (*a*) the priests, (*b*) 'the nobles' '*Khōrim*', the aristocracy, heads of houses, &c. (cf. iv. 13, 14, v. 7, vi. 17, vii. 5, xiii. 17), (*c*) 'the rulers,' the official element (*segānim*), (*d*) 'the rest that did the work,' referring by anticipation to the large body who were shortly afterwards employed on 'the work' of building the walls.

17. Nehemiah's appeal. It is implied that Nehemiah having satisfied himself as to the practicability of his plan called an assembly of those mentioned in the previous verse. How soon after his nocturnal ride is not stated.

the distress] R.V. **the evil case**, the same word as in i. 1.

Jerusalem lieth *waste*, &c.] Cf. ii. 3.

that we be no more a reproach] See i. 3, where the words 'affliction'

18 proach. Then I told them of the hand of my God which
was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had
spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build.
19 So they strengthened their hands for *this* good *work*. But
when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the
Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard *it*, they laughed
us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What *is* this thing

and 'reproach' are the same as the 'distress' or 'evil case,' and 'reproach' in this verse.

a reproach] i.e. an object of reproach by reason of our inability to defend ourselves, cf. Ps. xxii. 6, 'a reproach of men, and despised of the people;' Joel ii. 19, 'I will no more make you a reproach among the nations.' Ezek. xxii. 4.

18. *the hand of my God*] Cf. ver. 8. The blessing which had so far attended his plan.

as also the king's words] R.V. as also of, &c. He reported the substance of the king's words, which the compiler has not given us.

Let us rise up and build] The people responded with enthusiasm.

So they strengthened their hands] The presence of enemies on every side made the undertaking hazardous. At the same time the need of courage will be more obvious if we accept the theory of a recent hostile attack (cf. note on i. 2). The versions render the verb in the passive, LXX. ἐκραταιώθησαν αἱ χεῖρες αὐτῶν, Vulg. *confortatae sunt manus eorum*, which is followed by Luther, '*ihre Hände wurden gestärkt*.

for this *good* work] R.V. for the good work. Literally, 'for the good,' the same expression as 'the well-fare' in ver. 10. LXX. εἰς τὸ ἀγαθόν, Vulg. *in bono*.

19, 20. The Derision of the Enemy.

19. *Sanballat... Tobiah*] See ver. 10.

Geshem the Arabian] A third prominent adversary of Nehemiah is here introduced. His name occurs again in vi. 1, 2. In vi. 6, the name is written as 'Gashmu,' a dialectical variety agreeing, as it is said, with North-Arabian usage. Geshem is clearly the chief of some Arabian tribe. But whether he represented Arabians on the Southern border of Judah or the Arabian community established by Sargon king of Assyria in the depopulated neighbourhood of Samaria (715) is a disputed point. If the former, then the movement, which he now took part in, must be regarded as a coalition of all the neighbouring peoples against the restoration of Jerusalem's greatness. If the latter, then the movement is to be chiefly connected with the hostility of the Samaritans.

the Arabian] See on iv. 7.

laughed us to scorn] A strong word, familiar to us from its occurrence in the Psalter (ii. 4, xxii. 7, lix. 8, lxxx. 6). We are not told whether this scorn was expressed by letter or in a personal interview.

despised us] See the two words occurring together in 2 Kings xix. 21;

that ye do? will ye rebel against the king? Then answered 20
I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but you have no portion, nor right, nor memorial, in Jerusalem.

Ezek. xxxvi. 4. The ground of the contempt here expressed is not quite obvious. Some suppose that the enemy scoffed in ignorance of the king's decree in favour of Nehemiah's action, and that, regarding the Jews as embarking upon a course of open rebellion, they derided an undertaking which they thought could have but one conclusion. On the other hand, it is hardly likely that Nehemiah would have kept in the background the royal authority for his undertaking. We know he had been to the 'governors' of the province (ver. 9).

It is more probable that in order to alienate the Persian officials and to frighten the more timid spirits among the Jews, they pretended to interpret Nehemiah's action as the first step towards a real rebellion. The insignificance of the Jewish community in size and strength—its inability to take any political step of real importance—presented an easy target for ridicule, which was calculated to arouse the suspicions of Persian officials at the same time that it promoted disaffection amongst the waverers in Jerusalem.

will ye rebel] Or 'are ye rebelling?' Vulg. *Numquid contra regem vos rebellatis?* LXX. ἀποστατεῖτε.

20. *The God of heaven*] see on i. 4.

will prosper us] See i. 11. The Vulgate 'juvat nos,' the present tense corresponding to the following clause 'we are his servants,' is quite permissible: but is not so suitable to the occasion of Nehemiah's reply.

we his servants] as in i. 6, 10.

arise and build] ver. 18. The LXX. by a strange error renders δοῦλοι αὐτοῦ καθαροί, καὶ οἰκοδομήσομεν, reading 'n'qiyyim' for 'naqûm.'

no portion, nor right, nor memorial] These words closely resemble the declaration in Ezr. iv. 3, and imply some sort of claim on the part of these adversaries to a share in the fortunes of Jerusalem. If so, the adversaries must be regarded as mainly consisting of the Samaritan community. Nehemiah renouncing connexion with the Samaritans, affirms that they have no share in the present community, no ground for claiming it in the future, no memorial or justification of such claim in the past.

no portion] Cf. 2 Sam. xx. 1.

nor right] The word here used has generally the sense of righteousness. Here it means 'right,' 'just claim;' so in 2 Sam. xix. 28 'What right therefore have I, &c.;' and Joel ii. 23, 'he giveth you the former rain in just measure' (marg. 'Or in (or for) righteousness').

nor memorial] i.e. the Samaritans had no memorial nor proof of their past connexion with Jerusalem. The word is rendered 'remembrance' in Eccles. i. 11, ii. 16; 'memorial,' Num. xvi. 40, xxxi. 54. Cf. 'write this for a memorial in a book' (Ex. xvii. 14); 'a book of remembrance' (Mal. iii. 16).

3 Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they built the sheep gate; they sanctified it,

Ch. III. 1—32. The Distribution of the Work.

The Rebuilding of the Wall. The present chapter mentions 42 portions of the work. But the description is clearly incomplete; and we may suppose that Nehemiah's list either has been only partially reproduced by the Compiler or had been preserved in a mutilated copy. See notes on *vv.* 7, 25—28.

Eliashib the high priest] Eliashib was the son of Joiakim, and the grandson of Jeshua (Ezr. iii. 2; Neh. xii. 10). Though he co-operated in the work of rebuilding the walls, his close connexion with Tobiah, as described in chap. xiii. 4, shows that he did not sympathize with the policy of Ezra and Nehemiah in separating the Jews from any alliance or combination with other nations.

The technical title 'the high-priest,' literally 'the great priest,' which is used here and in *v.* 20, xiii. 28, is found in Lev. xxi. 10; Num. xxxv. 25, 28; Jos. xx. 6; 2 Kings xii. 10, xxii. 4; 2 Chron. xxxiv. 9; Hag. i. 1, 12, 14, ii. 2, 4; Zech. iii. 1, 8, vi. 11. Elsewhere we find him called 'the chief priest,' e.g. 2 Kings xxv. 18; 2 Chron. xxiv. 11, xxvi. 20; Ezra vii. 5, viii. 17; Jer. lii. 24.

the sheep gate] This gate is also referred to in ver. 32 and xii. 39. There can be little doubt that it is the same gate as that mentioned by St John v. 2, 'Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda.' The fact that the priests restored it suggests its proximity to the Temple. This is confirmed by the reference to it in chap. xii. 39. Its position was in the N.E. portion of the city, and corresponded to the modern St Stephen's gate, so far as the change in walls and ground-level permits of comparison. We may suppose that the name was taken from a sheep-market in the immediate neighbourhood. Large numbers of sheep would be required for the Temple sacrifices. The chief supplies of sheep would come from Eastern Palestine and the land of Moab. Their arrival through this eastern gate, whether a market stood near or not, was sufficient to account for the name.

Socin (Baedeker, *Palestine and Syria*, p. 151) says 'As the pool of Bethesda is now believed to have been near the present 'Ain esh-Shifâ,' and not at the place assigned to it by tradition, we must infer that the sheep gate led from the industrial quarter of the Tyropœon into the Temple precincts.' Comparing, however, this passage with Zech. xiv. 10, it is tempting to identify 'the sheep gate' with 'the gate of Benjamin,' which is not mentioned in our chapter, but which clearly stood at the N.E. of the city (cf. Jer. xxxvii. 13).

they sanctified it] The same Hebrew word occurs in connexion with the completion of a building in 1 Kings viii. 64, 'The same day did the king hallow the middle of the court.' It does not anticipate the solemn dedication of the walls in chap. xii. The completion of the priests' work was signalised by a special sacred function. (See note on the word 'sanctify' in xii. 47.)

and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel. And next 2
unto him builded the men of Jericho. And next to them

set up the doors] This was the final act. See 1 Kings xvi. 34, where 'gates' is kept by the R.V. as the rendering of the same word.

unto the tower of Meah] R.V. **unto the tower of Hammeah.** Marg., *unto the tower of 'The hundred.'* What is intended by 'the tower of Hammeah,' we have no means of determining. The alternative rendering 'the tower of The hundred,' supposes either that the tower was approached by 100 steps, or that it required 100 men to defend it. It is possible that there has been some early defect in the reading.

they sanctified it] The repetition of these words shows that the wall running from the sheep gate to the tower is here intended. But the omission of the object to the verb creates a difficulty.

unto the tower of Hananeel] R.V. **Hananel.** This was a well-known building, which is mentioned also in chap. xii. 39; Jer. xxxi. 38; Zech. xiv. 10. From the first of these passages we gather that the tower stood midway between the sheep gate and the fish gate. From the two others, that it stood at the N.E. corner of the city. Probably from this point the wall, which had run N.W., now turned due W. It may have owed its name to its builder.

The way in which it is mentioned here occasions some difficulty. If it is the same as the tower of Hammeah, there seems no reason why the writer should first of all have designated the well-known tower of Hananel by the name of Hammeah. If it is a different tower, how does it happen that two towers are mentioned as the limit of the priests' restoration of the wall?

Supposing the text to be correct, the tower of Hammeah may have been the Eastern tower of the same stronghold which is also called Hananel. From the emphatic way in which it is mentioned this fortress probably represented an important strategic point. Now 'the castle (or bîrah) which appertaineth to the house' may have stood on high ground near this point. And the conjecture is plausible that the tower of Hananel was the name given to an outwork of the great fortress at the point where the city wall ran into it.

According to this theory, Eliashib and the priests restored the city wall between the sheep gate and a portion of the great fortress which commanded the Temple. It does not appear from this chapter that these towers had been pulled down. They had possibly been left to receive a garrison or were not so easily dismantled as the walls.

2. *next unto him*] i.e. next to Eliashib and the priests. The description passing northward from the Temple, now turns west.

the men of Jericho] Some suppose that this section of the wall lay sufficiently on the N.E. quarter to offer to 'men of Jericho' a convenient piece of work.

On the other hand, the term may only denote a clan of fellow-townsmen, who had held together during the exile and were known by this name after they had settled in Jerusalem. See Ezr. ii. 34.

3 builded Zaccur the son of Imri. But the fish gate did the
sons of Hassenaah build, who *also* laid the beams thereof,
and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars
4 thereof. And next unto them repaired Meremoth the son
of Uriah, the son of Koz. And next unto them repaired
Meshullam the son of Berechiah, the son of Meshezabeel.

to them] R.V. marg. Heb. *to him.* Perhaps the Hebrew indicates here an abbreviation of or omission from the list. 'Next to,' here and in ver. 19 should have been rendered 'next unto' as elsewhere.

3. *But the fish gate*] R.V. **And the fish gate.** This gate is referred to in chap. xii. 39; 2 Chron. xxxiii. 14; Zeph. i. 10. It was on the northern or north-western wall; how far distant from the 'tower of Hananel' we cannot tell. But the two sections of wall-building undertaken by 'the men of Jericho' and 'Zaccur the son of Imri' intervened.

The name of the gate may have been derived from the proximity of the fish market. It has been suggested that the fish brought by the Tyrian traders (xiii. 16) and by the fishermen of Lake Galilee would arrive by this gate. From Zeph. i. 10, 11, it appears that this gate adjoined the merchant quarter of Jerusalem.

Hassenaah] cf. Ezr. ii. 35; Neh. vii. 38, Senaah.

who also] R.V. they.

the locks thereof] R.V. **the bolts thereof.** The details of the fully completed gate are repeated in *vv.* 6, 13, 14, 15. What the 'bolts' (A.V. 'locks') were, is not certain (LXX. κλεῖθρα, Vulg. *valvas*). The word occurs again in Cant. v. 5.

Some suppose them to be the 'sockets' or 'supports' into which the 'bars' and 'stanchions' of the gate filled; others the 'bolts' which held the cross-bars firm. The city gates of ancient times turned upon pivots in sockets instead of upon hinges; and we may conjecture that the word rendered 'locks' denoted that which held a gate in its place, while 'the bars' fastened it to the side-posts.

4. *repaired*] Literally 'made strong.' The word in the Hebrew is used of 'calking' a ship in Ezek. xxvii. 9, 27. In this chapter it is used of making good the defects and filling up the breaches in the wall. In ver. 19 the same verb is used with a different shade of meaning.

Meremoth the son of Uriah, the son of Koz] R.V. **Meremoth the son of Uriah, the son of Hakkoz.** The children of Hakkoz are mentioned in Ezr. ii. 61.

We hear of a further piece of restoration undertaken by this Meremoth in ver. 21.

Meshullam...Meshezabeel] R.V. **Meshezabel.** Meshullam the son of Berechiah appears from vi. 18 to have been one of the leading nobles, but, like Eliashib the high-priest, though he cooperated in the restoration of the walls, to have been also a close ally of Tobiah, whose son, Jehohanan, married Meshullam's daughter. He was therefore probably opposed to Nehemiah in general policy.

The identity of name with one of the sons of Zerubbabel (1 Chr. iii.

And next unto them repaired Zadok the son of Baana. And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles 5
put not their necks to the work of their Lord. Moreover 6

19) suggests the possibility that this noble was of David's line and that connexion with the royal family may have been a successful piece in the diplomacy of Tobiah.

Zadok the son of Baana] This may be the same as the Baanah who came up with Zerubbabel (Ezr. ii. 2; Neh. vii. 7, x. 27).

5. *the Tekoites*] Tekoa was a town about 10 miles due S. of Jerusalem on the edge of the 'Wilderness.' It is well known as the home of the prophet Amos (Am. i. 1, vii. 14), and as the dwelling-place of 'the wise woman' of 2 Sam. xiv. 2. The absence of the name of Tekoa from the list of towns in Ezra ii. is remarkable. Perhaps the Jews in Zerubbabel's time could not extend so far south. Here the mention of the Tekoites implies that the town was now occupied by Jews, or that old dwellers in Tekoa still formed a distinct community (cf. ver. 2) in Jerusalem. Their ardour in restoring the walls of Jerusalem receives further confirmation from ver. 27.

but their nobles] 'Nobles' (*addirim* = LXX. ἀδωρίμ, Vulg. *optimates*), the same word is thus rendered in x. 29; 2 Chr. xxiii. 20; it differs from that used in ii. 16, iv. 14, v. 7, vi. 17, vii. 5, xiii. 17.

put not their necks] The metaphor is taken from the ox ploughing with its neck in the yoke, cf. Jer. xxvii. 12.

the work of their Lord] R.V. **of their lord.** Marg. 'Or *lords* or *Lord*'. There are here three alternative renderings. (1) A.V. 'of their Lord.' The somewhat unusual phrase 'the work of their Lord' (Adonai) instead of 'the work of the LORD (Jehovah),' or 'the work of their God,' has been defended on the ground that it carries out the metaphor of the clause. This is the traditional Jewish interpretation. But the word is not common in these books as a Divine name (see note on i. 11), and the use of the pronoun 'their' makes the interpretation improbable (Vulg. *in opere Domini sui*). The use of this title for God in plain narrative is most improbable.

(2) R.V. marg. 'their lords,' namely, the leaders of the Jews; but this would not be at all a suitable word to describe the relation of the 'nobles' of a town to the 'rulers' of Jerusalem.

(3) 'their lord.' This rendering of the R.V. seems the most natural, and is best understood to mean a reference to Nehemiah himself (cf. Ezra x. 3). He was 'the lord' of the Jews, appointed by the king, and 'the nobles' of the Jewish towns as well as of Jerusalem owed him service and assistance in his great work.

The hostility of Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem to Nehemiah would make itself felt on the towns upon the borders of the neighbouring races. The nobles of 'Tekoa,' which lay on the outskirts of the wilderness, may very possibly have sympathised with the Arabian chiefs represented by Geshem, or have had intimate relations with the outlying peoples.

6. *Moreover the old gate*] R.V. **And the old gate.** Marg. 'Or, *the*

the old gate repaired Jehoiada the son of Paseah, and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah; they laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, and the locks thereof,
7 and the bars thereof. And next unto them repaired Melatiah the Gibeonite, and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon, and of Mizpah, unto the throne of the governor

gate of the old city or, *of the old* wall.' Literally rendered the words are 'And the gate of the old,' so that there is some uncertainty which word we should supply. From the mention of the same gate elsewhere (Neh. xii. 39) we gather that it stood between the 'fish gate' and the 'gate of Ephraim,' and is possibly the same as the 'corner gate' (2 Kings xiv. 13) which Zechariah calls 'the first gate' (xiv. 10). On the N. side the ground being more level the city would naturally extend itself in this direction. The gate possibly derived its name from being the entrance to the old city. Prof. Robertson Smith (Art. *Jerusalem*, *Enc. Brit.*) says: 'For obvious engineering reasons the eminence at the N.W. of the Haram area must always have been a principal point in the fortifications, and here the old gate may very well have been placed.' The 'gate of the old wall' is a less likely appellation. In one sense every gate that was restored was a gate of the old wall. If 'the old wall' was a part of an ancient or disused rampart, it would not have been a portion included in this description. When the fortifications coincided with an earlier and thicker wall, it was called 'the broad wall' (ver. 8).

Jehoiada] R.V. **Joiada.**

they laid the beams, &c.] See on ver. 3.

7. *Melatiah the Gibeonite, and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon, and of Mizpah*] In this arrangement of names it is natural to see the names of two leaders followed by the description of their respective followers. Melatiah is thus at the head of the Gibeonites, Jadon at the head of the men of Mizpah. But as the latter is called 'the Meronothite' (see also 1 Chron. xxvii. 30), we conclude that Meronoth, his native place, must have been a village in the immediate neighbourhood of Mizpah.

The men of Gibeon are included in vii. 25 among those who returned with Zerubbabel (see the parallel passage, Ezra ii. 20).

Mizpah, about 3½ miles N. of Jerusalem, the modern Nebi-Samwil. Rulers of Mizpah are further on mentioned as concerned in the restoration of other portions of the wall (*vv.* 15, 19). The men of Mizpah referred to in this verse may have been under different control (see next note).

unto the throne of the governor on this *side the river*] R.V. which appertained **to the throne of the governor beyond the river.**

This obscure clause has occasioned great difficulty. (*a*) According to the rendering of the A.V., it denotes the limit of the restoration undertaken by the men mentioned in this verse. 'The throne of the governor, &c.' will then be the official residence of the Persian satrap or the actual throne in which he sate dispensing justice. The preposition

on *this* side the river. Next unto him repaired Uzziel the 8
son of Harhaiah, *of* the goldsmiths. Next unto him also
repaired Hananiah the son of *one of* the apothecaries, and

'unto' may be understood to mean, *either* that the governor's house was built on the wall, and that the restoration mentioned in this verse reached this point; *or* that the governor's 'throne' was in the vicinity, and the restoration was carried on to a point over against it.

The chief objection to this rendering is the use of the word 'throne.' But it is more simple than the alternative rendering given below. And the supposition is very natural, that an official spot, close to the chief northern gate of the city (ver. 6), should become a recognised landmark. The visit of the satrap of the country W. of the Euphrates to the provincial capitals would be a rare event; and the spot which symbolised his dignity would receive a distinctive name.

(*b*) According to the rendering of the R.V., the clause is added by way of limitation after the mention of Mizpah. Mizpah it is supposed was partly under Jewish rulers (*vv.* 15, 19), partly under the rule of the Persian provincial governor. The boundary passed through the district of Mizpah. 'The men of Mizpah,' mentioned here, represented the portion under Persian rule, in which perhaps the village of Maronoth was included. By the indulgence of the Persian rulers (cf. ii. 7) a contingent was permitted to render aid to their brethren.

The phrase 'the throne of the governor beyond the river' will then be a *technical* term of authority in vogue among the Jews during the Persian supremacy. 'Throne' in the sense of 'rule' is poetical, cf. Ps. lxxxix. 29, 36.

There is nothing to be said in favour of another proposed rendering 'in the name of the governor, &c.' The Vulgate renders 'pro duce,' the LXX. ἕως θρόνου τοῦ ἄρχοντος.

8. *Uzziel...*of *the goldsmiths*] R.V. **Uzziel..., goldsmiths.** The R.V. gives the literal rendering. The meaning of course is that a guild or the guild of goldsmiths, who were represented by Uzziel, undertook the next piece of the wall. The wealth of 'the goldsmiths' is shown by the large portion undertaken by the members of their 'guild.' Cf. *vv.* 31, 32.

Next unto him also] R.V. **And next unto him.**

Hananiah the son of one of *the apothecaries*] R.V. **Hananiah, one of the apothecaries.** Marg. '*perfumers*'. The R.V. gives the meaning of the Hebrew, which is literally 'Hananiah, a son of the apothecaries or perfumers.' This Hananiah, possibly 'the son of Shelemiah' mentioned as engaged in restoring another portion of the wall, represented the guild of 'perfumers.'

The word 'apothecary,' which appears in the A.V. in Ex. xxx. 25, 35, xxxvii. 29; 2 Chron. xvi. 14; Eccles. x. 1, is not used in the sense of a vendor of medicines. The context in each passage shows that a dealer in ointments, spices, and perfumes is intended. The same word in the feminine is rendered 'confectionaries' in 1 Sam. viii. 13, where the R.V. marg. 'perfumers' is to be preferred.

This was a most important industry in Eastern countries, combining

9 they fortified Jerusalem unto the broad wall. And next unto them repaired Rephaiah the son of Hur, the ruler of

provision for the comforts of the poor and the luxuries of the rich (Cant. iii. 6), with the elaborate arts of embalming the dead.

In hot climates the anointing of head or feet with ointment and perfumes was a recognised courtesy offered a distinguished guest (Luke vii. 38, 46; John xii. 3). Anointing with sweet oil was an act of cleansing or purification (Ezek. xvi. 9; Ruth iii. 3; Judith x. 3). With women cosmetics constituted a considerable part of personal adornment (Cant. iv. 10).

and they fortified Jerusalem unto (R.V. even unto) *the broad wall*] R.V. marg. 'Or, *left*' for 'fortified,' giving the usual sense of the Hebrew verb.

The LXX. has καὶ κατέλιπον Ἰερουσαλὴμ ἕως τοῦ τείχους τοῦ πλατέος: the Vulgate 'dimiserunt Ierusalem usque ad murum plateæ latioris.'

The difficulty occasioned by the verb has given rise to very different interpretations of the passage:

(1) The A.V. following ancient Jewish interpretation renders 'fortified Jerusalem;' and it appears to be the case that the word occurs in Talmudic Hebrew with a meaning connected with building operations (Buxtorf, *sub voce*, 'pavimentarunt'). But even if this meaning be accepted, it is not easy to account for the occurrence of the words 'fortified Jerusalem' in the middle of a description, the whole of which deals with the fortification of Jerusalem.

(2) Accepting the usual rendering 'left,' the following explanations have been given:

(*a*) 'And they', i.e. the Babylonian troops, at the destruction of Jerusalem, had left this portion untouched. This translation introduces an imaginary subject, i.e. the Babylonians. It fails to explain the introduction of the reference to Jerusalem. It makes 'left' equivalent to 'left undestroyed.'

(*b*) The Jews who were engaged upon the work of restoration 'left untouched' this portion of the wall, which happened not to require rebuilding. This again gives an arbitrary meaning to the word 'left,' and the mention of 'Jerusalem' remains unexplained.

(*c*) They carried on the fortification at some distance from the dwelling-places of Jerusalem. The city wall extended further north than the houses. The builders 'left the city,' i.e. the neighbourhood of the houses, in order to complete the circumvallation included in the plan.

(*d*) 'And the Jews had abandoned Jerusalem,' i.e. Jerusalem was at this point not occupied by the Jews returned from the Captivity. The northern limit of the inhabited quarter did not extend so far as it had done in the Monarchy.

(*e*) It is possible that the builders at this point 'left' some portion of Jerusalem *outside* their wall. The circumference of the old city was larger than was now needed. In the course of the restoration of the wall the builders abandoned at some point the old outer wall and the uninhabited portion of Jerusalem which it included.

the half part of Jerusalem. And next unto them repaired 10
Jedaiah the son of Harumaph, even over against his house.
And next unto him repaired Hattush the son of Hashabniah.
Malchijah the son of Harim, and Hashub the son of Pahath- 11
moab, repaired the other piece, and the tower of the furnaces.

The exact meaning lies hid in the topographical allusion, which we cannot hope to understand. It seems most natural, (1) that the subject to the verb 'left' should be the builders just previously mentioned; (2) that 'Jerusalem' should imply the inhabited city. The solution offered by (*e*) seems to be the most probable. The new circumvallation was, as a rule, larger than the old. Here only where the builders went *inside* and left the old wall, it is expressly mentioned.

the broad wall] The broad wall is mentioned again in chap. xii. 38 as between 'the tower of the furnaces' and 'the gate of Ephraim.' The name was probably given to a portion of the wall where the thickness and strength of the structure indicated the strategic importance of this point in the fortifications. It is possible that this was the portion of 400 cubits which Amaziah pulled down (see 2 Kings xiv. 13; 2 Chron. xxv. 23) with the view of rendering Jerusalem defenceless on the N., and that this was the portion which Hezekiah took pains to strengthen and renew (2 Chr. xxxii. 5).

9. *the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem*] R.V. **the ruler of half the district of Jerusalem.** Rephaiah was ruler not of the city but of one of the districts into which Jerusalem was divided. The ruler of the other half is Shallum, mentioned in ver. 12. Compare the different positions of 'the ruler of Mizpah' (*v.* 19) and 'the ruler of the district of Mizpah' (*v.* 5). By comparison of this expression with 2 Kings xxii. 14; Zeph. i. 10, it would appear that some such division, necessitated by the growth of the Capital, had taken place during the Monarchy in the interests of urban administration. The district here referred to would be the commercial quarter of the city.

10. *And next unto them*] i.e. next unto those who were represented by Rephaiah.

Hattush...] Possibly a priest belonging to the family of this name mentioned in x. 4, or a Levite the son of the Hashabneiah mentioned in ix. 5.

Hashabniah] R.V. **Hashabneiah.**

11. *Harim...Pahath-moab*] See on Ezr. ii. 6, 32.

the other piece] R.V. **another portion.** This phrase, which occurs again in this chapter in *vv.* 19, 20, 21, 24, 27, 30, has been explained, (1) (as the A.V.), as equivalent to 'a further portion' of the same section of wall, (2) as 'a second portion' of restoration-work undertaken by those mentioned in the verse. The latter is the more natural interpretation. There is this difficulty: whereas in *vv.* 21 and 27 we find the recurrence of names which have occurred earlier in the chapter (*vv.* 4 and 5), in this verse and in 19, 20, 24, 30 the names of those who are said to repair 'another portion' are not mentioned again. Accordingly some commentators, laying stress on the point that in

12 And next unto him repaired Shallum the son of Hallohesh,
the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, he and his daughters.
13 The valley gate repaired Hanun, and the inhabitants of
Zanoah; they built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks
thereof, and the bars thereof, and a thousand cubits on the wall

vv. 19, 20, 21, 24, 27 the phrase is accompanied by a minute topographical notice, maintain that the words do not imply a *second* piece of work, but a special *continuation* of the work just mentioned.

On the other hand, it should be observed that (1) Malchijah's name at any rate recurs in *v.* 31; (2) in this portion of Nehemiah's description 'the gate of Ephraim' is strangely altogether omitted, in spite of its great importance (cf. viii. 16, xii. 39): (3) it is on other grounds very probable that the complete list of those engaged on the work of restoration has not been preserved, and that numerous names have been lost. A recognition of the incompleteness of the list will fully meet the difficulty presented in this verse, and in *vv.* 19, 20, 24, 30.

the tower of the furnaces] This tower lay between the gate of Ephraim and the gate of the valley (see xii. 38). It may have stood a little to the N. of the modern citadel. It was the fortress of the N.W. angle of the city, and probably constituted the chief fortification in connexion with the corner gate (2 Kings xiv. 13; 2 Chr. xxvi. 9; Jer. xxxi. 38; Zech. xiv. 10.

12. *the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem*] R.V. **the ruler of half the district of Jerusalem.** See note on ver. 9. This was the 'Zion' half of the city.

he and his daughters] The mention of 'his daughters' is strange. Some consider that the word 'daughters' is here used in its technical sense of 'villages' and 'country towns' (cf. xi. 25, 27), the inhabitants of which placed workers under the command of the ruler of the whole district. Others again accepting this rendering of 'daughters'='villages,' refer the pronoun 'he' to 'the district,' i.e. 'the district and the villages adjacent to that quarter of Jerusalem.'

But the most simple and literal explanation is probably the best. The whole chronicle of the restoration of the walls is a register of personal effort. The exceptional mention of women does not justify us in excluding the possibility of their useful cooperation, not only by sympathy and exhortation, but also by gifts of money, by contributions of food, and by the labour of their servants and retainers.

13. *The valley gate*] See note on ii. 13, 15. This was the main entrance on the western side.

Zanoah] This town, mentioned in xi. 30; Jos. xv. 34, is probably the modern Zanuah, some 13 miles W. of Jerusalem.

the doors thereof, &c.] See note on ver. 3.

and a thousand cubits on the wall unto the dung gate] R.V. **of the wall.** Some who have thought that this would be too great a distance of wall to be restored by a single section of the community regard the clause as a topographical parenthesis, ='There were a thousand cubits

unto the dung gate. But the dung gate repaired Malchiah 14
the son of Rechab, the ruler of part of Beth-haccerem; he
built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and
the bars thereof. But the gate of the fountain repaired 15
Shallun the son of Col-hozeh, the ruler of part of Mizpah; he

between the two gates.' But if we may suppose little restoration was here needed, no further details would be recorded of this section of the wall. This very reason, however, would enable us to accept the repairing of 'the thousand cubits' as the work of 'Hanun and the inhabitants of Zanoah.' Comparatively little work was here needed, and a small party could undertake a long stretch.

The 'dung gate' was probably at the S.W. angle of the wall. The wall having passed due S. from the 'valley gate' to the 'dung gate,' turned thence in an easterly direction.

14. *But*] R.V. **And.**

Malchiah] R.V. **Malchijah.** It is the same spelling as the 'Malchijah' in ver. 11. 'the son of Rechab.' Not necessarily a Rechabite. The Rechabites were forbidden to dwell in houses (Jer. xxxv. 7).

of part of Beth-haccerem] R.V. **of the district of Beth-haccherem.** Beth-haccherem (the house of the vineyard) is mentioned in Jer. vi. 1. It seems to have been due S. of Jerusalem, between Bethlehem and Tekoa. It is frequently identified with a well-known spot 6 or 7 miles S. of Jerusalem, the Frank Mountain (Arab. *Jebel Ferdis* = Hill of Paradise or Orchard), where are to be seen the remains of the Herodium, the castle built by Herod the Great. It is called 'the Frank Mountain' because tradition connects it with the stubborn resistance of the Crusaders against the Moslems. It commands one of the most beautiful views over the Dead Sea to be obtained near Jerusalem.

doors thereof, &c.] Cf. note on ver. 3.

15. *But the gate of the fountain*] R.V. **And the fountain gate.** See ii. 14. According to the old view, Nehemiah's description here passes over a considerable space (nearly half a mile in straight line) between the 'dung gate' and the 'fountain gate.' The omission is capable of being explained as due either to the omission of certain details, cf. ver. 11, or to the fact that the precipitous nature of the ground rendered little work necessary upon the southern wall. But it can hardly be accidental that a similar omission has to be understood in the other description of the wall's circuit (ch. xii. 31, 37). It seems reasonable to incline to the recent suggestion, that, 'the valley' of ver. 13, being the Tyropœon, the circuit of the fortification wall did not include the Western Hill, but ran directly S. down the E. side of 'the valley' as far as 'the dung gate', when it began to deflect eastward.

Shallun] The A.V. (1611) spelling 'Shallum' is perhaps due to ver. 12.

the ruler of part of Mizpah] R.V. **the ruler of the district of Mizpah.** A distinction is drawn between the town of Mizpah and the adjacent district. Cf. 'the district of Jerusalem,' *vv.* 9, 12. 'The ruler of Mizpah' itself is mentioned in ver. 19. See also on ver. 7.

built it, and covered it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and the wall of the pool of Siloah by the king's garden, and unto the stairs that go
16 down from the city of David. After him repaired Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, the ruler of the half part of Beth-zur, unto

covered it] The word so rendered does not occur elsewhere in the Bible. The LXX. renders ἐστέγασεν. It seems to correspond to the expression 'laid the beams thereof' in verses 3 and 6.

and the wall of the pool of Siloah by the king's garden] R.V. **And the wall of the pool of Shelah by the king's garden.** Marg. 'In Is. viii. 6, *Shiloah*'. On Siloam (=*Birket Silwân*), cf. John ix. 7. 'The pool of Shelah,' or of 'leading,' is fed by a subterranean channel leading from the Virgin's Spring, distant 1708 feet, through the Ophel rock. The connexion was discovered by Sir Charles Warren. The tunnel is a remarkable piece of engineering. On the very ancient inscription describing its construction which was found in 1880, see Sayce's *Fresh Lights*.

The pool here mentioned is probably the same as the lower pool, the modern 'Birket el Hamra.' The water from the pool flowed through 'the king's garden.' The old city wall extended much further south than the modern city. The pool was formed by a heavy dam of masonry, probably part of the city wall. 'The king's garden' is mentioned also in 2 Kings xxv. 4; Jer. xxxix. 4, lii. 7. We cannot conclude for certain from this verse that it was included within the walls. But the water supply of the town depending largely upon the pool, the pool was probably enclosed by the wall. The double walls mentioned in 2 Kings xxv. 4 probably protected both pool and gardens.

and unto the stairs, &c.] R.V. **even unto the stairs**, &c. These 'stairs' mark the limit of Shallum's work in a northerly direction. The 'stairs' were the steps ascending the steep declivity of the 'Ophel' or southern spur of Mt. Zion, on the eastern side of the city, and leading to the 'water-gate' mentioned in Neh. viii. 1, 16, above 'the house of David' (see xii. 37). See Sayce, p. 87. 'Remains of these stairs have been discovered by Schick and Guthe a little to the east of the Pool of Siloam, as well as a little to the south of the Virgin's Spring (but within the line of the old wall), so that they must have run up the eastern slope of Zion, and ended not very far from the square in front of the water-gate.'

from the city of David] The 'city of David' was the name given to the fortress captured by David, known as Zion. Its locality has been much disputed. (1) General tradition has identified it with the southern extremity of the western hill; (2) recently Conder and Warren have assigned it to the northern elevated portion of the same hill; (3) there is, however, good reason for identifying it with 'the Temple hill.' This last view is favoured by the language of the O. T. associating Zion with the dwelling or Temple of Jehovah. The present context almost conclusively proves that the 'city of David' lay on the eastern or Temple Hill.

16. *the ruler of the half part of Beth-zur*] R.V. **the ruler of half**

the place over against the sepulchres of David, and to the pool that was made, and unto the house of the mighty. After him repaired the Levites, Rehum the son of Bani. 17
Next unto him repaired Hashabiah, the ruler of the half part of Keilah, in his part. After him repaired their brethren, 18

the district of Beth-Zur. Beth-Zur (Jos. xv. 58), the modern Beitsur, was about 13 miles S. of Jerusalem. It commanded the road to Hebron and was fortified by Rehoboam (2 Chr. xi. 7). From the mention of it in this verse we may gather that it ranked as an important town on the Southern frontier. In the Maccabean Wars it appears as a strongly fortified place and the scene of three of the bloodiest conflicts (cf. 1 Macc. iv. 29, xi. 65, 66, xiv. 7.

unto the place *over against the sepulchres of David*] This must have been a well-known spot opposite the tombs of the former kings of Judah. From the way in which these are mentioned in 2 Chron. xxxii. 33 'they buried (Hezekiah) in the ascent of the sepulchres of the sons of David,' they were probably on the side of the south-east or east cliff of Mt. Ophel. We may expect interesting discoveries to result from investigations instituted at this spot for the sake of identifying the royal sepulchres.

and to the pool that was made] R.V. **and unto** &c. From this description of 'the pool' some have supposed that Nehemiah regarded it as a recent construction in his own time. Others identify it with the pool constructed by Hezekiah mentioned in Isai. xxii. 9—11.

It clearly lay north of the pool of Shelah, and was fed perhaps by the same conduit from the Virgin's Well. Cf. Sayce, 'Traces of this have been found by Dr Guthe, close to the so-called tree of Isaiah; and since the city wall here formed one of the walls of the reservoir, the latter must have been constructed after the walls had been built.'

the house of the mighty] R.V. **the house of the mighty men.** This name was probably given to the traditional site (or building on the site) of the former royal barracks erected by David for his 'body-guard of mighty men' (2 Sam. xvi. 6, xxiii. 8). That it denotes the residence of the Temple guard (cf. 1 Chron. ix. 26, xxvi. 6), is a less probable explanation of the name.

Rabbi Saadiah understands by the expression 'the Sanhedrin,' who were mighty in the Law, and compares Ps. ciii. 20, 'ye mighty in strength that fulfil his word.'

17. *the Levites, Rehum the son of Bani*] Here it may be noticed that the community is mentioned first, its representative afterwards. This variation from the usage in *vv.* 7 and 8 is perhaps intended to give prominence to the work of the Levites or of a particular band of them.

Rehum, whose name is the same as that of one of the chief colleagues of Zerubbabel at the Return from Exile (Ezra ii. 2), is perhaps to be identified with the Rehum in Neh. x. 25. Bani is mentioned in ix. 5.

the ruler of the half part of Keilah] R.V. **the ruler of half the district of Keilah.** This is in all probability to be identified with the Keilah of Josh. xv. 44; 1 Sam. xxiii. 1, a town about 15 miles S.W. of Jerusalem.

Bavai the son of Henadad, the ruler of the half part of
19 Keilah. And next to him repaired Ezer the son of Jeshua,
the ruler of Mizpah, another piece over against the going
20 up to the armoury *at* the turning *of the wall.* After him
Baruch the son of Zabbai earnestly repaired the other piece,

in his part] R.V. **for his part**, i.e. for the district which he represented, in distinction from the district mentioned in the verse following.

18. *their brethren*] i.e. the men of the other half of the same district.

Bavai, the son of Henadad] This can hardly be different from the 'Binnui, the son of Henadad' mentioned in *v.* 24. So the LXX. which reads Βενεῖ.

19. *Ezer...the ruler of Mizpah, another piece*] R.V. **portion.** 'The ruler of Mizpah' as distinguished from 'the ruler of the district of Mizpah' (*v.* 15).

over against the going up to the armoury at *the turning* of the wall]. A much-disputed piece of topography. There is nothing to show in which direction the wall turned.

The 'armoury' will naturally be connected with the mention of 'the house of the mighty men' of *v.* 16; to the N. of which the present description seems to place it. The 'armoury' is mentioned in 1 Kings x. 17, 21, xiv. 26; Is. xxii. 8.

'the turning of the wall.' This spot is referred to in 2 Chron. xxvi. 9; 'Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the corner gate, and at the valley gate, and *at the turning of the wall*, and fortified them.' It was clearly then strategically one of the most important points in the fortifications of the city.

20. *Baruch the son of Zabbai*] R.V. marg. 'Another reading is, *Zaccai.*' Zabbai (so Ezr. x. 28) is the reading of C'thib and LXX., Zaccai of K'ri and Vulg.

earnestly repaired] The word rendered 'earnestly' calls for remark. (*a*) In the original it appears as an unusual causative of a verb meaning 'to be angry,' which in this exact form is only elsewhere found in Job xix. 11. 'He hath also *kindled his wrath* against me. The word occurs also in Jer. xii. 5 = 'contend,' xxii. 15 = 'strivest to excel.' (*b*) A causative verb in the past tense immediately preceding the finite verb 'repaired,' may be idiomatic Hebrew, but is not to be expected in narrative prose. (*c*) The word 'repaired' is found nowhere else in this list with any qualification. If the reading is correct, the word will denote the ardour or the emulous spirit with which Baruch undertook his work.

The same word differently pointed is capable of meaning 'towards the hill,' being then the same as that rendered in Gen. xiv. 10 'to the mountain.' This must have been the reading of the Vulgate 'in monte ædificavit Baruch.'

If this is the right reading, it refers to the summit of the Ophel, where the high-priest's house would have stood immediately S. of the Temple.

from the turning *of the wall* unto the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest. After him repaired Meremoth the son of Urijah the son of Koz another piece, from the door 21
of the house of Eliashib even to the end of the house of Eliashib. And after him repaired the priests, the men of the plain. After him repaired Benjamin and Hashub over 22
against their house. After him repaired Azariah the son of 23
Maaseiah the son of Ananiah by his house. After him re- 24
paired Binnui the son of Henadad another piece, from the

the other piece] R.V. **another portion.** See note on *v.* 11. Here these words, as Baruch's name has not occurred before, suggest the incompleteness of the description.

21. *Urijah the son of Koz*] R.V. **Uriah the son of Hakkoz.**

another piece] R.V. **another portion.** Meremoth was also concerned in the repair of the Northern wall. See on *v.* 4.

even to the end] This description seems to imply that the high-priest's house was a building of considerable extent, and that it was built upon the city wall. The word rendered 'end' (*taclîth*) seems only to occur in this sense twice elsewhere in the O.T., Job xxvi. 10, 'confines,' xxviii. 3, 'end.' Elsewhere e.g. Ps. cxxxix. 22 it is used to denote 'perfection,' 'completeness.' The words proved a difficulty to the versions, e.g. LXX. ἕως ἐκλείψεως, Vulg. *donec extenderetur*.

22. *the priests, the men of the plain*] R.V. **the men of the Plain.** R.V. marg. 'Or, *Circuit*'. Literally, 'the men of the Ciccar,' LXX. Ἐκχεχάρ, Vulg. 'de campestribus Jordanis.'

Some have explained the term to refer to the neighbourhood of Jerusalem according to its use in xii. 28 'the Plain (or Circuit) round about Jerusalem.' Others have explained its use in this passage by its technical application to the Jordan plain, Gen. xiii. 10, xix. 17; 2 Sam. xviii. 23. As in xii. 28 the reference to Jerusalem is carefully expressed, the absolute use of the word here may be thought to favour the latter signification. If so, the priests mentioned came from Jericho and the other cities of 'the Plain,' ἡ περίχωρος τοῦ Ἰορδάνου, Matt. iii. 5.

23. *After him*] R.V. **After them.** Marg. Heb. *him*, see on *v.* 2.

by his house] R.V. **beside his own house.** Judging from the marked manner in which it is mentioned in *v.* 24, Azariah's house must have been conspicuous for its size or its position near the wall. A difference of aspect is implied by 'over against' and 'beside.'

24. *Binnui the son of Henadad another piece*] R.V. **portion.** In all probability the same as 'Bavvai the son of Henadad' mentioned in *v.* 18. 'Binnui' is mentioned in x. 9 as one of the Levites.

We have either to suppose that 'Bavvai' in *v.* 18 is a corruption for Binnui, or as some have held, that Binnui is the name of the Levitical house of which Bavvai was the chief representative. Of these alternatives the former is preferable. For (1) the reading in *v.* 18 is doubtful; (2) the names in these verses are clearly those of priests and Levites; (3) 'Binnui' is mentioned in x. 9 as a leading Levite.

house of Azariah unto the turning *of the wall*, even unto the
25 corner. Palal the son of Uzai, over against the turning
of the wall, and the tower which lieth out from the king's
high house, that *was* by the court of the prison. After him
26 Pedaiah the son of Parosh. Moreover the Nethinims dwelt

He may very well have assisted in one portion of the restoration as a leading citizen of Keilah, in another as a chief Levite.

even unto the corner] R.V. **and unto the corner.**

25. *Palal the son of Uzai*] R.V. **Palal the son of Uzai repaired.**

the tower which lieth out from the king's high house, that was *by the court of the prison*] R.V. **the tower that standeth out from the upper house of the king, which is by the court of the guard,** R.V. marg. 'Or, *the upper tower...from the house of the king*'.

It is not easy to determine the meaning of this description. The adjective 'upper' may be applied either to the king's house or to the tower; and the clause 'which is by the court of the guard' follows it as a further description either of house or tower. In Jer. xxxii. 2 'the court of the guard' is *in* 'the king's house' (cf. Jer. xxxiii. 1, xxxvii. 21, xxxviii. 6, 13, 28, xxxix. 14, 15). In the present passage we have *either* 'the king's upper house,' so called to distinguish it from the king's house, in which was the court of the guard; *or*, as seems more probable, seeing that the passage is a description of the city wall, 'the upper tower,' which is identified as the one projecting from the king's palace and close to the 'court of the guard.' In the vicinity of the royal palace and Temple there would probably be several towers. The LXX. ὁ πύργος...ὁ ἀνώτερος accepted the latter explanation.

It is very probable that the base of 'the tower' here spoken of was reached by Sir Charles Warren. 'A great wall still exists, though buried in rubbish, joining the Haram wall at the south-east angle. It was evidently built for purposes of fortification, for it is fourteen feet thick....There are several towers projecting from the wall, one of which is very remarkable, as it projects more than any of the rest, standing upon scarped rock, and having another wall leading from it going down towards the Kedron.' (Harper, *The Bible and Modern Discoveries*, p. 509.)

'the upper house of the king'. This building, erected upon the site of the old palace of the kings of Judah and perhaps at this time occupied by the chief officials of the city, stood apparently on the 'Ophel' summit, immediately S. of the Temple precincts.

Pedaiah the son of Parosh] R.V. **Pedaiah the son of Parosh** repaired. R.V. marg. '*Pedaiah the son of Parosh* (*now...Ophel*) repaired *unto*, &c.' See note on *v.* 26. On Parosh see Ezr. ii. 3. As in the earlier part of the verse the verb 'repaired' has to be understood.

26. *Moreover the Nethinims dwelt in Ophel...lieth out*] R.V. (**Now the Nethinim dwelt in Ophel...standeth out**). The parenthesis probably includes the whole verse. We prefer the R.V. translation to that of the *margin* of the R.V., which limits the parenthesis to the first clause, and connects the second clause with the previous verse.

in Ophel, unto *the place* over against the water gate toward the east, and the tower that lieth out. After them the 27
Tekoites repaired another piece, over against the great

(1) The omission of the verb at the close of *v.* 25 creates no real difficulty; for we have had a similar omission at the beginning of the verse.

(2) We should not expect that a parenthetical clause relating to the dwellingplace of the Nethinim would, in the midst of so much detailed topography, describe it in such brief and general terms as 'in Ophel.' (In xi. 21, where the same words occur, they are possibly based on this passage.)

(3) The reference to 'the tower that standeth out' is an allusion to the same tower as that mentioned in the previous verse. The parenthesis seems to be introduced in order to connect the dwelling of the Nethinim with the tower just spoken of.

(4) Verse 27 opens with (R.V.) 'After him:' and although in view of *vv.* 2, 23, 29 this is not conclusive, it certainly favours the R.V. treatment of the parenthesis.

in Ophel] This may possibly mean on the brow of the Ophel hill to the east of the Temple. The wall of 'Ophel' was built on by Jotham (2 Chr. xxvii. 3). And the 'hill' was surrounded by a wall in Manasseh's reign, 2 Chr. xxxiii. 14. 'Ophel' means 'a mound,' and was the name applied to the S. continuance of the Temple hill.

over against the water gate toward the east] Between the Temple and the water gate there seems to have been a large open space in which the people could assemble (see viii. 1, 3, 16, xii. 37, 39; Ezra x. 9). The houses of the Nethinim approached or abutted on the city wall at this point.

The 'water gate' was obviously so called because the path leading from the spring of Gihon, the Virgin's Spring, entered the city here. Water-carriers passing in and out gave the gate its name. On Gihon, cf. 1 Kings i. 33, 38. It is "the one spring of Jerusalem, known as the Virgin's Fountain to Christians, and as 'the Mother of Steps' to Moslems, because of the steps which lead down into the vault from the present surface of the valley" (Conder's *Palestine*, p. 26).

From here the wall led northward or north-eastward to 'the corner' (*v.* 31).

the tower that lieth out] Probably the same as that mentioned in *v.* 25. Perhaps the tower was intended especially to protect 'the water gate,' in connexion with which it is here mentioned.

27. *After them*] R.V. **After him**, i.e. after Pedaiah the son of Parosh (*v.* 25).

the Tekoites] See note on *v.* 5.

another piece] R.V. **another portion.**

the great tower that lieth out] R.V. **standeth out.**

The adjective 'great' is perhaps intended to distinguish this tower from that similarly mentioned in *vv.* 25, 26. It may have been one of the defences on the eastern side of the Temple.

28 tower that lieth out, even unto the wall of Ophel. From above the horse gate repaired the priests, every one over
29 against his house. After them repaired Zadok the son of Immer over against his house. After him repaired also Shemaiah the son of Shechaniah, the keeper of the east gate.
30 After him repaired Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, another piece. After him repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah over against his

even unto the wall of Ophel] R.V. **and unto the wall of Ophel.** This is clearly the same wall as that mentioned in 2 Chron. xxvii. 3, xxxiii. 14.

28. *From above*] R.V. **Above.** The word implies that the dwelling-places of the priests stood on higher ground.

the horse gate] This gate is mentioned 2 Kings xi. 16; 2 Chron. xxiii. 15; Jer. xxxi. 40, where it seems to be described as the easternmost portion of Jerusalem overlooking the valley of Kedron. It must have led to the S.E. corner of the Temple courts. It has been suggested that its name is derived from the horses dedicated to the sun by idolatrous kings of Judah (2 Kings xxiii. 11). It was probably a little south of the modern 'golden gate.'

over against his house] R.V. **over against his own house**, as in *v.* 29.

29. *After them*] R.V. marg. 'Heb. *him*'. See note on *v.* 3.

Zadok the son of Immer] The head of the priestly family of Immer. See Ezra ii. 37.

After him] R.V. **And after him.**

the keeper of the east gate] This has sometimes been identified with 'the water gate' of *v.* 26. But it is very improbable that, in a topographical chapter such as this, the same gate should be mentioned by two different names without any word of explanation.

Considering that the previous name is that of a priest, it is natural to suppose that Shemaiah, 'the keeper of the east gate,' was a Levite, and the east gate was the eastern approach to the Temple precincts.

30. *Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph,...piece*] R.V. **portion.** This particular mention of Hanun as 'the sixth son' of Zalaph is noteworthy, since the mention of other names in this chapter is unaccompanied with any detail of description. It is not mentioned in *v.* 13, where Hanun's name first occurs; but in this passage it has the support of all the versions. If therefore the word is, as some suppose, a corruption for 'and the inhabitants of Zanoah' (*v.* 13), or a numerical gloss that has accidentally found its way into the text, the error must have arisen in very early times.

Meshullam the son of Berechiah] His name has occurred in *v.* 4 and it is strange that the words 'another portion' are not added in connexion with this second mention of his work. We should naturally expect this tribute to be applied to him rather than to Hanun.

over against his chamber] The word for 'chamber' is an unusual form—occurring elsewhere in the O.T. only in xii. 44, xiii. 7—for the ordinary word occurring in Ezr. viii. 29, where see note. Perhaps

chamber. After him repaired Malchiah the goldsmith's son 31
unto the place of the Nethinims, and *of* the merchants, over
against the gate Miphkad, and to the going up of the corner.
And between the going up of the corner unto the sheep gate 32
repaired the goldsmiths and the merchants.

it is used here to denote some official residence (LXX. γαζοφυλάκιον, Vulg. *gazophylacium*). The mention of Meshullam's 'chamber' increases the probability that he was a priest of eminence, if, as the context somewhat suggests, 'the chamber' was within the Temple precincts.

31. *Malchiah the goldsmith's son*] R.V. **Malchijah one of the goldsmiths.** See note on *v.* 8. Malchiah belonged to the guild of the goldsmiths.

unto the place of the Nethinims] R.V. **unto the house of the Nethinim.** The Nethinim were stated (*v.* 26) to have their dwelling 'in Ophel.' Here a house belonging to their number is described as on the wall, probably N.E. of the Temple precincts. This we may presume was the official residence of those engaged in the service of the Temple.

and of *the merchants*] LXX. οἱ ῥωποπῶλαι. The tradesmen of the same class generally lived near to one another, cf. Jer. xxxvii. 21.

It is at first sight strange to find a house belonging to a mixed body of Nethinim and merchants. But the needs and equipment of the Temple services and of those who took part in them were sufficiently varied to account for this combination. We should think of an Oriental bazaar rather than of a modern house. The open spaces near the Temple would be thronged with money-changers and sellers of animals for sacrifice and of articles for offerings. On the later abuse of this custom cf. Matt. xxi. 12; John ii. 14. Some who have found a difficulty in this combination disregard the tradition of the accents, and divide the verse differently, stopping at 'Nethinim,' and making a new clause of which 'the merchants' are the subject, i.e. 'and the merchants repaired, &c.' We should however certainly expect the phrase 'after him' at the beginning of such a clause.

over against the gate Miphkad] R.V. **over against the gate of Hammiphkad.** The word 'Miphkad' occurs in Ezek. xliii. 21, 'Thou shalt also take the bullock of the sin offering, and he shall burn it in the appointed place (*miphkad*) of the house, without the sanctuary.' It has hence been often supposed to be the gate through which the bullock of the sin offering was led 'without the sanctuary.'

The words 'over against' seem to imply that the gate of Hammiphkad was not on but opposite the city wall. Some identify it with the modern 'golden gate.'

The LXX. Μαφεκάδ and the Vulg. 'porta judicialis' fail to throw light upon its position or purpose.

and to the going up of the corner] R.V. **and to the ascent** (marg. 'Or, *upper chamber*') **of the corner.** We seem here to have the junction point of two walls, where the elevation was greater than elsewhere, or where there was a well-known 'upper chamber' used for look-out purposes or as a place of public gathering.

4 But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation,
2 and mocked the Jews. And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do *these* feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will

32. *the going up*, &c.] see *v.* 31.
unto the sheep gate] R.V. **and the sheep gate.** This was the starting place of the description (*v.* 1).
the goldsmiths] see *vv.* 8—31.
the merchants] see *v.* 31.
The proximity of their work of restoration suggests that both goldsmiths and merchants represented communities largely and closely interested in the transactions connected with Temple offerings. For, apart from the supply and repair of vessels, furniture, and dress, required for the daily ministration, the dedication of precious things would create a constant traffic close to the Temple. The merchants would establish themselves at the main approaches to the Temple and expose their wares to the throngs of worshippers and sacrificers who collected about this spot.

CH. IV. 1—23. THE OPPOSITION TO THE WORK. (*a*) 1—6. THE RIDICULE OF THE SAMARITANS. (*b*) 7—23. THE MENACES OF THE FOE, AND THE PRECAUTIONS TAKEN BY NEHEMIAH.

1. The IVth Chapter in ordinary editions of the Hebrew text does not begin till *v.* 7.
and took great indignation] The form of the word here used in the original is of rare occurrence and is found only in late Hebrew, 2 Chron. xvi. 10, 'was in a rage;' Ezek. xvi. 42, 'be angry;' Ps. cxii. 10, 'be grieved,' Eccles. v. 17, vii. 9. For the common use of the word in its causative sense, 'provoke to anger' see *v.* 5.
2. *And he spake before his brethren*] Sanballat's 'brethren' would be the chiefs of the Samaritan community.
and the army of Samaria] 'the army' (LXX. δύναμις): the word here used is the one generally employed for 'armed forces,' see ii. 9; Ezra viii. 22; Esth. i. 3. The Samaritans seem to have hastily summoned their forces to consider whether it would be practicable to compel the Jews by a sudden onslaught to desist from an undertaking so menacing to Samaritan independence. 'The army' therefore is not equivalent to 'an assembly (Vulg. *frequentia*),' but to the population trained in war and capable of bearing arms, collected in face of a sudden emergency. Some have supposed that a body of regular Persian troops stationed at Samaria under a Governor (ii. 7) is intended.
What do these *feeble Jews?*] The word rendered 'feeble' only occurs here in the O.T. It denotes the languor of weakness. It is akin to a word found in 1 Sam. ii. 5, 'And she that hath many children *languisheth*' (A.V. 'is waxed feeble').
will they fortify themselves?] so R.V. text. R.V. marg. 'Or, *will they leave to themselves* aught? Or, *will men let them alone?*'

they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burnt? Now Tobiah 3

This short interrogative clause has occasioned much difficulty, on account of the word rendered 'fortify,' the natural rendering of which (as in iii. 8, where see note) would be 'leave.' The versions, LXX. ὅτι οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι οὗτοι οἰκοδομοῦσι τὴν ἑαυτῶν πόλιν, Vulg. *num dimittent eos gentes*, fail to throw any light upon the passage.

(*a*) The rendering of the English versions gives a clear and intelligible meaning. But (1) the use of the word in the sense of 'fortify' belongs to late Hebrew and is very rare: (2) in Biblical Hebrew it can only be supported by the uncertain testimony of iii. 8: (3) there is no mockery in such a question, corresponding to the tone of the other queries.

(*b*) 'will they leave to themselves aught?' This rendering which preserves the usual meaning of the disputed word, is open to the two very strong objections that, (1) the point of the question is conveyed by a word which is not found in the text, i.e. 'aught,' (2) the full meaning, obtained from this rendering (i.e. 'do they expect to survive such an attempt? the Persian Empire will extirpate a people of such presumption; and nothing will be left to them'), is read into the words rather than derived from them.

(*c*) 'will men let them alone?' i.e. will the Persian Government or the neighbouring races permit the Jews to carry out their design? Against this rendering, which gives a very intelligible meaning, it must be urged, that (1) it necessitates an awkward change of subject introducing a new subject between two clauses in which 'the Jews' are the subject, (2) it treats the Jewish project with serious indignation instead of with the contempt expressed in the other queries.

(*d*) 'will they commit themselves unto them?' i.e. will the Jews entrust themselves and so great a work to their leaders? But we should expect a greater definiteness of expression in a short scornful question.

(*e*) 'will they on their own behalf (lit. for themselves) commit themselves (i.e. unto God)?' According to this rendering Sanballat is quoting a cant Jewish phrase 'to commit oneself,' leaving his hearers to understand its special application. This use of the word may be illustrated from Psalm x. 14, 'the helpless committeth (lit. *leaveth*) himself unto thee.' The mockery of such a question is quite in harmony with the general tone of Sanballat's question.

(*f*) But it is more probable that the great obscurity of the words arises from an early error in the text, a scribe omitting two syllables very similar to those which followed, and writing 'lâhem'='to them' for 'lêlōheyhem'='to their God.' The sense then would be, 'Will they commit themselves to their God?' The same textual error occurs in 1 Sam. iii. 13 (see R.V. *marg.*). It may then be compared with Rabshakeh's words in 2 Kings xviii. 30, 32, 35.

will they sacrifice?] A mocking question; equivalent to 'do the Jews imagine that they have only to collect together and propitiate their God with sacrifices, and their work will be done?'

will they make an end in a day?] Is it to be all done so simply and so quickly? 'In a day' might be rendered 'in the day,' as if they said,

the Ammonite *was* by him, and he said, Even *that* which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their
4 stone wall. Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for

'will they make a beginning and an end in this day?' (LXX. *σήμερον*, Vulg. in una die).

will they revive...?] Are they going to work miracles? The LXX. renders 'will they heal?' (*ἰάσονται*). Cf. 'the repairing' (R.V.) in ver. 7.

of the heaps of the rubbish which are burnt] R.V. **out of the heaps of rubbish, seeing they are burned?** The word 'burned' refers to 'the stones.' Compare on the accumulation of rubbish Sir C. Warren's statements respecting the excavations at Jerusalem, e.g. in his paper 'The site of the Temple of the Jews' (*Trans. Bibl. Arch.* vol. vii. p. 320), 'We... found that the old wall exists to the enormous depth of 125 feet below the rubbish, with stones of very great size.'

3. *Even* that *which they build* &c.] Whatever they are trying to build.

a fox] R.V. marg. 'Or, *jackal*'. The light tread of some creeping animal was enough to bring down their weak wall stone though it was. The '*shuâl*' or fox is elsewhere mentioned in Judg. xv. 4; Ps. lxiii. 10; Ezek. xiii. 4; Lam. v. 18; Cant. ii. 15. In the passages from Ps., Ez., Lam., it is spoken of in connexion with ruined places. The R.V. margin gives the alternative, 'jackal' in each case, except in Ezek. and Cant., where the slyness of the animal (cf. Luke xiii. 32) shows that the fox is clearly intended. The Hebrew language probably does not distinguish between the 'jackal' and the 'fox.' Perhaps the allusion in Canticles to the depredations committed by foxes in a vineyard throws light upon Tobiah's sneer. A fox, he seems to say, would have as little difficulty in breaking through the wall of Jerusalem as through a vineyard fence.

break down] Vulg. *transiliet.*

4, 5. Nehemiah's Soliloquy and Prayer.—A parenthesis.

4. This is the first of the parenthetical addresses to the Almighty, which are a characteristic feature of Nehemiah's writing. See also v. 19, vi. 9, 14, xiii. 14, 22.

Hear, O our God] Cf. Lam. iii. 61, 'Thou hast heard their reproach O LORD, and all their devices against me.'

for we are despised] Literally, 'we have become an object of contempt.' The people are inseparable from their God; the mockery of Sanballat and Tobiah directed against the Jews affects Jehovah.

turn their reproach upon their own head] R.V. **turn back** &c. Cf. Ps. lxxix. 12, 'And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord.' Lam. iii. 64, 'Thou wilt render unto them a recompence, O LORD, according to the work of their hands.'

and give them for a prey in the land of captivity] R.V. **and give them up to spoiling in a land of captivity**—'Spoiling,' a word used in late

a prey in the land of captivity: and cover not their iniquity, 5
and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for
they have provoked *thee* to anger before the builders. So 6
built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto
the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.

But it came to pass, *that* when Sanballat, and Tobiah, 7

Hebrew (2 Chr. xiv. 13, xxv. 13, xxviii. 14; Ezra ix. 7; Esth. ix. 10, 15, 16; Dan. xi. 24, 33) here, as in Ezra ix. 7, Dan. xi. 33, to denote the process of plundering, not as in A.V. the thing plundered and carried off. 'A land of captivity' (not 'the land'), the expression is general, but obviously Nehemiah wishes for the enemies of the Jews the misfortunes of his own race.

5. *and cover not their iniquity*] i.e. forgive it not. Cf. Ps. lxxxv. 2, 'Thou hast *forgiven* the iniquity of thy people, thou hast *covered* all their sin'—i.e. so as not to see and visit it.

and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee] i.e. let its record remain for ever in the book of divine remembrance and cry for retribution. Compare Ps. cix. 14, 'Let the iniquity of his fathers be *remembered* with the LORD; and let not the sin of his mother be *blotted out*.' The metaphor is differently applied in Ps. lxix. 28, 'Let them be *blotted out* of the book of life.'

for they have provoked thee *to anger*] The verb, which is of frequent occurrence in connexion with idolatrous practices, is here used absolutely as in 2 Kings xxi. 6, 22. But there is no ambiguity of meaning, if we supply the pronoun 'thee' as the object. The LXX. omit the clause: the Vulg. renders '*quia irriserunt aedificantes*.'

before the builders] Sanballat and Tobiah had publicly contemned Jehovah; perhaps they sought to alienate the Jews engaged in building the wall by means of their mockery and their provocation. Nehemiah prays, as it were, that the same builders who had heard their utterance of defiance might witness their overthrow. Compare again Rabshakeh's endeavour to shake the fidelity of the people of Jerusalem, 2 Kings xviii. 26—28.

6. *So built we*] R.V. **So we built.** No emphasis on 'we.'

unto the half thereof] R.V. **unto half** the height **thereof.** 'All the wall was joined together.' The circumvallation was complete. There were no gaps or breaches. The wall had been raised to half its height all the way round. The most ancient wall, the foundations of which were discovered by Sir Charles Warren, must have had a height of 200 feet!

for the people had a mind to work] The enthusiasm of the people explains the rapidity of the work. Nehemiah disclaims any credit to himself.

a mind] literally, 'heart.'

7. In most editions of the Hebrew Bible, this is the 1st verse of the ivth Chapter.

Sanballat... Ashdodites] Here we have a complete list of the foes of Jerusalem. See notes on ii. 10, 19. The Ammonites were the fellow-countrymen of Tobiah, the Arabians of Geshem (ii. 19). With them

and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, *and* that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very
8 wroth, and conspired all of them together to come *and* to

are classed the dwellers by the coast (the Shephêlah) represented by the Ashdodites or inhabitants of Ashdod (Azotus, modern Esdûd). Ashdod was one of the principal Philistine cities (1 Sam. v.). It occupied a strong position near the sea, and once seems to have commanded a seaport only 3 miles distant. The mention of Ashdod here is peculiar. It was, we may suppose, the chief town on the Philistine coast, and resented an undertaking which threatened to revive the power and importance of Jerusalem. On the intermixture of the Ashdodite or Philistine element with the Jews, see xiii. 23. 'Ashdod' was said to have been captured by Uzziah (2 Chr. xxvi. 6). It commanded the caravan route into Egypt. It was captured by the Assyrians in 715 (Is. xx. 1), and by the Egyptians under Psammetichus after a long siege (Herod. II. 157).

Ashdod was captured by the Maccabees and partially destroyed (cf. 1 Macc. v. 68, x. 84, xi. 4). It was restored by Gabinius. Philip the Evangelist preached there (Acts viii. 40).

It has been objected that a hostile coalition of different races, Samaritan, Arabian, Ammonite, Philistine, against the Jews of Jerusalem would have been impossible in a district subject to Persian rule.

But it is a mistake to suppose that the internal administration of the Persian Empire would be sufficient to prevent petty feuds among the subject races. The satraps took little notice of the ceaseless disputes between the tributary towns and nationalities on the frontier. The suggestion is needless that 'the Arabians, Ammonites, Ashdodites' are only names of the communities most largely represented in the mixed concourse which followed Sanballat.

that the walls of Jerusalem were made up] R.V. **that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem went forward.** R.V. marg. 'Heb. *healing went up upon the walls*'. The literal rendering is given in the R.V. marg., the metaphor is that of an open wound or cut to which a bandage is applied, bringing relief and restoration (LXX. ὅτι ἀνέβη ἡ φυὴ τοῖς τείχεσιν Ἱερ.: Vulg. *quod obducta esset cicatrix muri Jer.*). The same words occur in 2 Chron. xxiv. 13 'the work was perfected by them,' (R.V. marg. *healing went up upon the work*), and in Jer. viii. 22, xxx. 17.

and *that the breaches began to be stopped*] These words explain the metaphor of the previous clause. 'Breaches,' the same word that occurs in 'Perez-Uzzah' and 'Baal Perazim.' The verb derived from the same root is used of a wall 'broken down' (Neh. i. 3; 2 Chr. xxxii. 5). LXX. διασφαγαὶ ἀναφράσσεσθαι: Vulg. *interrupta concludi.*

to be stopped] Literally 'to be closed.'

then they were very wroth] Their anger mentioned in *v.* 1 reached a higher pitch on hearing of the successful progress of the work.

8. *and conspired all of them*] R.V. **and they conspired all of them.**

fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it. Nevertheless we 9
made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against
them day and night, because of them. And Judah said, 10

R.V. makes a stronger pause at the close of *v.* 7, substituting a semicolon for the comma. 'Conspired.' The word here used is the usual term for secret treachery.

to come and *to fight*] R.V. **to come and fight.** Literally 'to come fight' without the copula. This idiom, which occurs again in ix. 15, 23 (cf. 1 Chron. xii. 31; 2 Chron. xx. 11), combines the thought of the two infinitives, the latter being epexegetic of the former. It is equivalent 'to come for the purpose of fighting.'

and to hinder it] R.V. **and to cause confusion therein.** More literally 'and to cause confusion to him.' The masc. pronoun is here used, referring to the dwellers in Jerusalem. 'to cause or make confusion', the word rendered 'confusion' occurs only here and in Isai. xxxii. 6, 'to utter *error* against the LORD.' The rareness of the word occasioned difficulty to the versions. Hence LXX. *ποιῆσαι αὐτὴν ἀφανῆ*, Vulg. *molirentur insidias.*

The sudden arrival of hostile forces outside Jerusalem would be calculated 'to cause confusion.' It would encourage those who were already disaffected, and would terrify the timid. It would impede the work; for the patriot Jews would have to abandon the building for the sake of defending their walls, while the unwilling workers would gladly avail themselves of the pretext.

9. *Nevertheless*] R.V. **But.** The simple copula in the original introduces the contrast between the plan of the enemy and the defensive measures adopted by the Jews. 'Nevertheless' is too strong an adversative. The thought is merely 'and on our side, we made our prayer.' On the prominence of prayer in these books see Ezr. viii. 23, ix. 5, x. 1; Neh. i. 4, ii. 4. Nehemiah mentions the spiritual source of aid first.

and set a watch] i.e. posted sentinels. The human means of defence are not neglected although the confidence rests in a higher protection.

day and night] i.e. while the builders were at work on the wall, the city was almost as defenceless against a surprise as in the dead of night.

against them...because of them] 'against them,' i.e. 'to repel their attack:' 'because of them,' literally 'from before their face,' i.e. in consequence of their hostility and the fear which they had excited. Others render 'over against', i.e. so as to watch and observe the movements of the foe. The rendering 'over against' introduces the idea of a definite mustering of defenders upon some particular quarter of the city, and some have suggested that the reference is to the north side as the most open for assault and nearest to the Samaritan forces. This gives too precise and limited a meaning. The character of the verse is indefinite and general. The recourse to prayer is mentioned in the first clause, and the posting of sentinels in the second. In both cases the action is due to the movement of the enemy, 'because of them.'

The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and *there is* much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.
11 And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and
12 cause the work to cease. And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten

After the words 'against them' it seems at first sight a weak conclusion to the sentence. But the words 'against them' belong to 'set a watch' and are the antithesis to 'unto our God.' The words 'because of them' refer to both clauses of the verse 10—12. Nehemiah's trials do not come upon him singly. He is confronted with (*v.* 10) the murmurs of the Jews, (*v.* 11) the openly expressed confidence of his foes, (*v.* 12) the fears of the Jews in the rural districts.

10. *And Judah said*] i.e. the Jewish community speaking, by their rulers or representatives, to Nehemiah.

The strength of the bearers of burdens, &c.] Literally 'the strength of the bearer of burdens, &c.,' referring to the whole class of the working population. The LXX. wrongly ἡ ἰσχὺς τῶν ἐχθρῶν.

so that we are not able, &c.] The complaint here described seems to be introduced at this point to show the variety of obstacles to the work. Besides the direct hostility of the Samaritans, the Jews themselves declared their strength to be giving way before the fatigue. The task of clearing away the accumulated rubbish before building the walls had exhausted their patience and their powers. It is not necessary to regard this declaration as mutinous. It was occasioned by the pressure felt by the whole community in consequence of the continuous labour upon the wall. There was no reserve to fall back upon in case of a sudden alarm. To Nehemiah at such a crisis the complaint must have greatly added to the difficulties of the moment. It had all the tone of disaffection, and reminded him that in the face of a hostile foe he could place little confidence either in the power or in the willingness of the Jewish citizens to defend themselves.

11. *our adversaries said*] 'adversaries,' cf. Ezra iv. 1. After mentioning the source of weakness within the walls, Nehemiah describes the danger from without. 'Said.' He gives, as if in their own words, their secret project of a surprise attack upon Jerusalem, either reporting the information brought by spies or describing by imagination what the intentions of the enemy were.

in the midst among them] R.V. **into the midst of them.**

12. The translation of the last clause of this verse presents a great difficulty, and leaves us doubtful with what intention the Jews here spoken of addressed their countrymen.

The verse stands in very loose connexion with the two previous verses. It represents a fresh complication in the difficult position which confronted Nehemiah. To discontent within, and the schemes of the foe without, is added the panic of the Jews in the outlying districts.

the Jews which dwelt by them] By this expression are apparently

times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us *they will be upon you.* Therefore set I in the lower places 13

intended the Jewish dwellers in towns and districts adjacent to the territory of the Samaritans, Ammonites, Arabians and Philistines, who had sent contingents to assist in the rebuilding of the walls—e.g. Jericho, Tekoah, Gibeon, Mizpah, Zanoah (chap. iii. 2, 5, 7, 13). 'by them,' comp. *v.* 3.

they said unto us ten times] i.e. again and again, as often as occasion offered—cf. Gen. xxxi. 41, 'Thou hast changed my wages ten times.'

From all places whence ye shall return unto us they will be upon you] R.V. **from all places, Ye must return unto us,** marg. 'Or, *From all places whence ye shall return* they will be *upon us*'. The Authorised Version is here unintelligible.

(1) The R.V. text is a literal translation, with the exception of the omission of the relative before 'Ye must return.' This however may be explained as an instance of the relative in late Hebrew idiom prefixed to the 'Oratio Recta,' like ὅτι in late Greek. 'From all places' refers to the scattered Jewish communities. The foes of Jerusalem were on every side; the fears of the Jewish frontier-towns on every side were increased by the growing hostility of the neighbouring peoples. The words of their petition to Nehemiah and his companions may be explained in one of two ways.

(*a*) They express apprehension on their own account and for their own homes. Deprived of the able-bodied men who had been sent to work at the walls on Jerusalem, these little towns and villages could not hope to defend themselves against the gathering foe. Wherefore they address themselves through the leaders to their fellow-townsmen sojourning in Jerusalem, 'Ye must return unto us.'

(*b*) They are alarmed for the safety of their fellow-townsmen. They see the combination of foes against Jerusalem and regard her overthrow as certain. They entreat their own friends and relatives to return home in time to save their lives.

Of these alternatives (*a*) is much to be preferred.

(2) The R.V. marg. 'From all places whence ye shall return *they will be* upon us.' This rendering is perfectly literal, but it seems impossible to find a satisfactory meaning for 'whence ye shall return.' The interpretation 'On every side, as soon as you leave a place, the enemy occupy it and attack us,' gives a fair sense, but is hardly applicable to the circumstances. The Jews had no moving forces in the field.

(3) Another rendering which is supplied by the reading of the 3rd pers. for the 2nd pers. plur. is found in the Versions, LXX., Vulg., and Peshitto Syriac. The 3rd pers. plur. then refers to the enemy; and the translation will run, 'And they told it us ten times from all the places where the enemy went to and fro against us.' (LXX. *ἀναβαίνουσιν...ἐφ' ἡμᾶς.* Vulg. *venerant ad nos*). But the alteration of the text has the appearance of a correction to make the passage easier; and the renderings 'told,' instead of 'said,' 'went to and fro,' instead of 'return,' introduce fresh difficulties.

13. *Therefore set I*, &c.] Nehemiah's action recorded in this verse

behind the wall, *and* on the higher places, I even set the people after *their* families with their swords, their spears,
14 and their bows. And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord, *which is* great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons,

was intended to meet the needs of the situation generally. 'Therefore' must not be limited in application to *v.* 12. The difficulties which beset him on so many sides compelled him to suspend part of the building operations, and to employ some of his available men for purposes of defence.

in the lower places behind the wall, and *on the higher places*] R.V. **in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in the open places.** The original in this passage is very obscure. The true meaning seems to be given by the R.V. Nehemiah stationed armed detachments under the cover of the wall, in the open spaces, where houses and buildings would not interfere with their movement.

The difficulties of the clause are occasioned by (1) the verb 'I set' without an object, although repeated with an object in the next clause: (2) the word rendered 'the space' (lit. 'the place'); (3) the words 'in the open places.' The LXX. ἐν τοῖς σκεπεινοῖς seems to have understood 'sheltered places.' Others explain of 'places where the sun shone,' i.e. where the glint of the soldiers' armour would betray their presence and deter attack.

According to one bold conjecture we should render, 'And I set the engines (or catapults) in the space behind the wall in well-protected positions.'

after their *families*] Probably defending the portion of the wall upon which they were at work. This distribution of the defence among families guaranteed the discipline and organization and energy resulting from the strong clan feeling of the Semitic races. Many would thus be required merely to defend their own homes: cf. iii. 28.

swords...spears...bows] the chief offensive weapons: swords for the hand-to-hand melée, spears as the enemy drew near, the bow and arrow for attack from the distance.

14. *And I looked, and rose up*] Nehemiah's 'look' seems to denote his inspection of the guards which he had stationed.

unto the nobles, and to the rulers] R.V. marg. 'Or, *deputies*'. Upon the difference of these two classes see note on ii. 16.

the Lord] R.V. **the Lord.** The sacred name here used is 'Adonai,' not 'Jahveh;' see on i. 11, (iii. 5).

which is *great and terrible*] For these epithets, see note on i. 5, and compare ix. 22. The attributes of power and awe belong to the God of Israel and ensure the victory of those that trust him, cf. Deut. iii. 22, xx. 31, 32.

fight for your brethren...houses] Nehemiah exhorts his men to fight courageously. To the Jews the contest must be for their very existence

and your daughters, your wives, and your houses. And it 15
came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work. And it came to pass from that time forth, *that* the half of 16
my servants wrought in the work, and the *other* half of

as a people. Their foes are banded together to compass the extermination of their race and name. The brotherhood of the race (brethren), the blessings of family and home (sons and daughters), the ties of personal affection (wives) or cherished ancestral inheritance (house) were at stake. The enemy against whom they fought knew no pity.

15. Success of Nehemiah's precautions.

our enemies] a different word in the original from that rendered 'adversaries' in *v.* 11.

that it was known unto us] i.e. their project of a sudden attack.

God had brought their counsel to nought] i.e. through the precautionary measures taken by Nehemiah. The words 'brought their counsel to nought' are the same as those rendered 'frustrate their purpose' in Ezr. iv. 5.

we returned...work] This clause implies what is not definitely stated. The enemy, on hearing that Nehemiah was prepared to meet their attack, seem to have abandoned their intention of an immediate assault. Nehemiah and his companions were able to resume the work upon the wall, although precautions were still necessary.

16. *the half of my servants wrought in the work*] R.V. **half of,** &c. Literally 'half of my young men.' The LXX. by a strange error τῶν ἐκτετιναγμένων. These were probably the bodyguard attached to the person of Nehemiah as the governor. They are mentioned again in *v.* 23; v. 10, 16. We gather that only in the case of these his personal attendants did Nehemiah still insist upon arms being held in readiness, while the work of building went on. The rest of the Jews were exempted. Nehemiah's servants were kept prepared for any emergency. One half of them worked on the wall: the other half were stationed under arms at various points holding the weapons of their comrades.

and the other *half of them held both the spears*, &c.] R.V. **and half of them held the spears.** In the original the copula 'and' stands before 'the spears.' It has been suggested that this implies the falling out of a word, e.g. 'the swords' after which the copula would be natural, i.e. 'the swords and the spears, &c.' The interpretation which, accepting the introduction of the word 'swords,' begins a new sentence with 'and the spears, &c.' is harsh and improbable. But it is best to suppose that the copula has been accidentally inserted from the neighbouring words. The wearing of a sword was not incompatible with the manual work. The weapons held by the non-working detachment are just those which would have rendered work on the wall impossible. Cf. *v.* 18.

the spears] The 'spear' (*romakh*) mentioned here and in *vv.* 13

them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers *were* behind all the house

and 21 seems to have been the principal thrusting weapon. We do not find it anywhere spoken of as a 'javelin' to be hurled. It must have been more of the Greek phalanx spear than the 'pilum' of the Roman soldier. It is mentioned in 2 Chron. xi. 12, xiv. 8, xxv. 5, xxvi. 14, in connexion with the armies of the Southern kingdom, in Jer. xlvi. 4, with the forces of Pharaoh-Necho, in Ezek. xxxix. 9, with the armies of Gog. The same word is used of the weapons with which the prophets of Baal mutilated themselves as they offered sacrifice on Mount Carmel (1 Kings xviii. 28).

the shields, and the bows] There were two kinds of shields in the armies of the East, the one small and round ('the buckler'), the other large and oblong. They are mentioned together in 2 Chron. xxiii. 9; cf. 1 Kings x. 16, 17. Representations of the two kinds may be seen in the Assyrian sculptures. Here the shields are of the smaller kind (magen), and would be used by those who carried spears.

and the bows] In the Assyrian bas-reliefs we constantly find 'bowmen' attacking a city protected by shield-bearers, and discharging their arrows behind large oblong shields. Here however shooting from behind a rampart, the large shields would not be required.

and the habergeons] R.V. **and the coats of mail.** Cp. also 2 Chron. xxvi. 14, where the R.V. makes the same alteration. It is unlikely that the common soldiers mentioned in these two passages would have worn heavy and elaborate 'coats of mail' such as Saul is described as offering to David (1 Sam. xvii. 38) or Ahab seems to have worn at Ramoth-Gilead (1 Kings xxii. 34; 2 Chron. xviii. 33). The wearing of 'scale' or 'link' armour was probably confined to the officers of an army; and it may be doubted whether the soldiers of a provincial governor would have been so fully and expensively equipped.

We should probably understand the defensive armour here mentioned to consist of suits of tough leather doublets, 'jerkins,' protecting the body down to the knees and leaving the arms bare. The hard specially prepared hides, of which they were made, were almost impenetrable to the arrow. In some cases no doubt thin 'scales' of metal were sewn into the leather, and Nehemiah's bodyguard would be better armed than the ordinary Jewish citizens. For 'habergeon'=a little coat-of-mail covering the head and shoulders, compare (see *Bible Word-Book*) Latimer, *Serm.*, p. 29, 'And be ye apparalled or clothed,' saith Paul, 'with the habergeon or coat armour of justice.' The word is used by the A.V. in Ex. xxviii. 32, xxxix. 23; 2 Chron. xxvi. 14; Job xli. 26. It is derived from the French 'haubergeon'=neck covering.

and the rulers were *behind all the house of Judah*] so R.V. text; R.V. marg., '*all the house of Judah that builded the wall. And they that* &c.'

The meaning of this clause seems to be that 'the rulers' or princes took up their position to the rear of those engaged in working at the wall, so that at any moment, when the alarm should sound, they could issue their commands and take the necessary measures to repel the attack.

of Judah. They which builded on the wall, and they that 17
bare burdens, *with* those that laded, *every one* with one of
his hands wrought in the work, and with the other *hand*
held a weapon. For the builders, every one had his sword 18

17. *They which builded on the wall*] R.V. **They that builded the wall.** The Hebrew preposition rendered 'on' in the A.V. occurs also e.g. in *v.* 6, 'So we built the wall,' and merely expresses the object.

(*a*) These words are sometimes taken in conjunction with the conclusion of the previous verse (R.V. marg.), on account of the mention of them 'that builded the wall' in connexion with them 'that bare burdens;' whereas *v.* 18 seems to speak of 'the builders' as a different class from them 'that bare burdens.'

(*b*) Another explanation takes the first words of this verse as a nominative absolute, standing before the two verses 17 and 18 which relate respectively to the two classes into which the wall builders would be distributed, i.e. 'As for them that builded the wall, as well they that bare burdens, laded themselves &c. (18) as the builders'.

(*c*) The R.V. renders the words quite simply. It makes *v.* 17 refer both to the builders and to the burden bearers, *v.* 18 to the builders only. 'They that builded on the wall' are then further defined in *v.* 17 as 'they that bare burdens.' 'The builders' in *v.* 18, mentioned without further definition, must be limited to those occupied in the construction of the wall.

This makes very good sense. But the language is not without ambiguity, for which it is probable that the text is really accountable.

and they that bare burdens] See previous note. These words describe one class of workmen, distinguishing those who removed rubbish and carried material, stones, &c., from those occupied in the construction. If we take into account the enormous size of the stones used in the building of the ancient walls, and bear in mind the Assyrian representations of the moving of heavy weights by rollers, pulleys, mounds, &c., we may realize that the moving of the blocks and placing them *in situ* required a distinct class of workmen from those who removed the earth and the rubbish to prepare foundations, or constructed the mounds up which the stones could be drawn. This latter class is here indicated.

with *those that laded*] R.V. **laded themselves.** The word in the Hebrew is the predicate. It does not denote a third class of workmen.

every one... *and with the other* hand *held a weapon*] R.V. **every one ...and with the other held his weapon.** This clause shows that the workmen here mentioned had one hand free. They were probably employed in carrying baskets of rubbish over their backs or on their heads.

a weapon] The word here employed is not common. It denotes 'a missile,' and in this case was probably a light javelin.

18. *For the builders*] R.V. **And the builders.** Not, as A.V., a fresh explanatory sentence, but a continuation of the foregoing, a description of the other class of those engaged in the work.

his sword girded by his side] Both hands were occupied in the work of laying the stones, which would be done chiefly by skilful mechanism

girded by his side, and *so* builded. And he that sounded
19 the trumpet *was* by me. And I said unto the nobles, and
to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work *is*
great and large, and we *are* separated upon the wall, one
20 far from another. In what place *therefore* ye hear the
sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God
21 shall fight for us. So we laboured in the work: and half of
them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the

with pulleys and rollers. The free action of both hands would be requisite. But though thus fully occupied, they were to be armed against a surprise attack. The mention of the 'sword' here accounts for its absence in *v.* 16.

And he that &c.] This is a distinct parenthetical sentence introducing the personal reminiscence. The men were scattered over a large area, and the commands of the governor were to be given by sound of trumpet, so that the alarm could be given to all at the same time.

by me] i.e. at my side, cf. *v.* 3. The words imply that Nehemiah was the life and soul of the defence, and that he was untiring in moving from point to point in the wall, superintending the work and directing the disposition for the defence.

19. *nobles...rulers* &c.] as in *v.* 14, and ii. 16, where see note.

large] literally 'wide,' referring to the extensive character of the building operations, which caused the defenders to be so scattered.

20. *In what place* therefore] R.V. **in what place soever.**

resort ye thither] literally 'thither shall ye collect or assemble yourselves together'.

our God shall fight for us] The Jews shall fight, and even against foes superior in numbers and strength shall prevail. Their God shall fight for them. See also Ex. xv. 3—6, 'The LORD is a man of war... Thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy;' xiv. 14, 'The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace...' Cf. Deut. i. 30, iii. 22, xx. 4, xxviii. 7.

21. *So we laboured*] R.V. **So we wrought.** The word in the original being the same as that rendered 'wrought' in *vv.* 16 and 17, it is best to adhere to the same English equivalent. 'We:' the pronoun is emphatic, i.e. I and my servants. The verse refers to Nehemiah and his men alone, as is shown by the mention of 'half of them.' It continues the narrative from *v.* 18. *vv.* 19 and 20 are parenthetical.

half of them held the spears] That is to say, Nehemiah's bodyguard was divided into two companies, who alternately worked at the wall and mounted guard, holding the weapons of their comrades in readiness.

till the stars appeared] literally 'till the going forth of the stars.' The word is familiar to us from such passages as Gen. xix. 23, 'The sun was risen (lit. gone forth) upon the earth when Lot came unto Zoar'. Ps. xix. 6, 'His (the sun's) going forth is from the end of heaven.' The stars come forth from their 'chambers' (Job ix. 9).

stars appeared. Likewise at the same time said I unto the 22
people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labour on the day. So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my 23
servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none

22. *Likewise...said I unto the people*] Another prudent regulation is enacted by Nehemiah. He addresses 'the people,' namely the common people capable of bearing arms, as distinguished from the nobles on the one hand and Nehemiah's servants on the other. The object of the fresh enactment is to secure that during the nights the city should be garrisoned with its full strength.

Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem] From this we gather that numbers of the people were employed during the day in the vicinity of Jerusalem in farming and other occupations, or, being employed upon the walls by day, wandered forth and slept outside the gates. If they lodged (i.e. passed the night) outside the walls, they were liable to be surprised in detail and murdered by the enemy. For the defence of such extensive and unfinished works, Jerusalem could not afford to lose a man unnecessarily. Nehemiah therefore required that all, whatever their employment, should sleep in the city. At the time when the exhausted builders took their rest, the greatest possible number of inhabitants were in this way retained within the gates. The disaffected also were deprived of opportunities for intriguing by night with the enemy. 'every one with his servant,' literally 'his young man.' Some would restrict this expression to the 'warriors,' each of whom had his attendant, much as a Mediæval knight had his squire. But it is preferable to attach to the words a more general sense, i.e. 'everyone, master and servant alike.' Those who employed labourers would be responsible for seeing that their 'hands' did not disobey this edict.

a guard to us] i.e. to Nehemiah and his bodyguard. These additional inmates of the city increased the strength of the defence by night.

and labour on the day] R.V. **and may labour in the day.** Literally 'and in the day a labour.' Those who were compelled to lodge within the walls would not be able to elude their employers and officers. They would be better under control for the systematic work needful for the building. They could not wander far from the city. Work could be recommenced in the early morning without delay; whether engaged on the walls or in other ways, all were thus placed under surveillance.

23. *my brethren...servants...men of the guard which followed me*] Nehemiah mentions in detail those in whom he had complete confidence and upon whose faithfulness the success of his project depended. These shared their leader's vigilance and imitated his endurance. Not one of them put off his clothes the whole time that the building went on. They were prepared for an attack at any moment.

'brethren.' These would be the relatives of Nehemiah, cf. i. 2.

of us put off our clothes, *saving that* every one put them off *for* washing.

The whole house or clan to which he belonged staunchly supported him throughout the crisis.

'servants'...'men of the guard which followed me.' Under these two heads Nehemiah seems to describe those whom he has mentioned in *v.* 17 as 'my servants.' He distinguishes here between his personal attendants consisting of Jewish retainers, and the bodyguard consisting chiefly of foreigners allotted him as governor by the Persian king.

saving that *every one put them off* for *washing*] R.V. **every one** went with **his weapon** to **the water.** R.V. marg. 'The text is probably faulty.' The clause has occasioned great difficulty. Literally rendered the words run, 'each one his weapon the water.' The LXX. omit the words, probably from inability to discover their meaning. The error in the text is therefore of very early date. The Syriac seems to have conjectured 'days' for 'water.'

(*a*) The A.V. follows the conjecture of the Vulg. 'unusquisque tantum nudabatur ad baptismum,' according to which the Hebrew word for 'his weapon' becomes by a change of vocalization a verb = 'they sent (i.e. cast off) each one his clothes for the water,' i.e. in order to wash. The Hebrew however could not possibly bear this very strained interpretation.

(*b*) Another old rendering is 'each one his weapon was (in the place of, or equivalent to) water,' i.e. 'instead of washing they had each to stand fast to their arms,' is equally improbable.

(*c*) Another rendering 'each one had (by his side) his weapon (and) his (draught of) water' gives intelligible sense, but not such as can be justified by the original.

(*d*) Ewald's rendering, 'the taking off of each man's clothes was for water,' i.e. 'to satisfy his necessities, not to lie down to rest,' seems very uncalled for. It is greatly to be questioned whether Nehemiah even 'in his rough and open style' would have introduced such an allusion or in such words. (Ewald, *Hist. of Isr.* vol. v. p. 156, note 1, Eng. Transl.).

(*e*) Some moderns rendering 'his weapon' (shil'kho) as if it were the verb (shâl'khû) translate 'they sent each one for water.' They could not leave their post, and had to have the necessaries of life brought to them where they stood. This use of 'send' as equivalent to 'send for,' is scarcely supported by 2 Sam. xv. 12, since here a thing and not a person is the object of the verb. Others, reading 'shâl'khû, render, 'Every one gave up the use of water,' a quite inadmissible translation.

(*f*) The R.V. rendering which introduces the words 'went with... to' makes good sense of the clause, but follows very unnaturally upon 'none of us put off our clothes,' neither stating an exception nor introducing a cognate idea.

(*g*) A good conjectural emendation of the text gives the sense 'each one remained with his weapon in his hand' (or 'in his right hand').

(*h*) But it is probable that the error of the text is due to the

And there was a great cry of the people and of their 5
wives against their brethren the Jews. For there were that 2
said, We, our sons, and our daughters, *are* many: therefore

accidental omission of certain words. We expect some statement of the *length of time* during which Nehemiah and his followers continued without retiring to rest. Perhaps the clause may have run 'each one with his weapon in his hand for a full month of days.' The Syriac version 'we will not put off our clothes during a month of days' agrees with this suggestion, and the Arabic gives a similar rendering, 'till the end of a month and days.'

V. Difficulties within the Walls.

(*a*) **1—13.** Nehemiah's measures to redress the wrongs of the poor: (*b*) **14—19.** His self-sacrificing generosity to his countrymen.

1. *And there was a great cry*, &c.] R.V. **Then there arose a great cry**, &c. The R.V. rightly shows that the outbreak of the discontentment described in these verses was connected with the rebuilding of the walls. A general stoppage of trade must have resulted from the national undertaking. The presence of the enemy in the neighbourhood prevented free agricultural labour.

the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews] By 'the people and their wives' are denoted the poorer classes, the great bulk of the nation as distinguished from the nobles and the priests. 'Their brethren the Jews,' seem here to denote 'the nobles and the rulers' whom Nehemiah rebukes in *v.* 7. At any rate the cry proceeds from the poor, the multitudes who were driven in their need to borrow, against the few who could afford to lend. The actual expression 'their brethren the Jews,' as in *v.* 8, does not imply any particular section of the people, but is employed to contrast the true fraternal relation of fellow-citizens with the existing selfishness and oppression.

2. *For there were that said*] This and the two following verses describe the people's complaint. Their misfortunes were brought to a climax by the condition of hostilities, which put an end to trade and threatened town and country with ruin. The class referred to in this verse are the labourers, who depended upon wages.

*We...*are *many*] The number of the poorer population in comparison with the wealthy was probably disproportionately large. The community since the return under Zerubbabel had never been prosperous. It had suffered much from the ill-treatment of the neighbouring peoples, more especially of the Samaritans. The pressure of the work on the wall, coupled with the expectation of attack, brought matters to a crisis. It was impossible to obtain regular employment, and prices had gone up. They had no property like those mentioned in *vv.* 3 and 4, upon the security of which they could borrow money.

therefore we take up corn for them &c.] R.V. **let us get corn** &c. The words in the A.V. are ambiguous. The clause expresses the wish. It is the utterance of the poor who have grown desperate. They demand food for themselves and their families. They cannot acquiesce in

3 we take up corn *for them*, that we may eat, and live. *Some* also there were that said, We *have* mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of

starvation, when they know that wealthy capitalists—their own fellow-countrymen—have made money out of their necessities and could well afford in a time of common peril to render them relief. Hence the words have a ring of menace. 'If we are not given corn, let us take it'. It was equivalent to a threat either to use violence or to surrender the city to its enemies.

The Vulgate 'accipiamus pro pretio eorum frumentum' gives a different interpretation of the words. It supposes that these poor starving people offered to sell their children as slaves in order that they might get money to buy food for themselves. This gives a sense approximating that of the conjecture to read "*orebhim*' for '*rabbim*', 'We give in pledge our sons and our daughters.' In favour of this conjecture it is claimed (1) that the alteration is very slight, (2) that it brings *v.* 2 into close parallelism with *v.* 3, (3) that it obviates the awkwardness of the present text 'our sons and our daughters, we are many,' (4) that the present text is at variance with Scripture in making the size of families a subject of complaint. The conjecture is ingenious. But the existing text gives a good sense (see above), and is supported by the versions, which do not show any variation of reading. The position of the words 'our sons and our daughters, we' &c. emphasizes the thought uppermost in the people's mind. The conjecture doubtless increases the verbal parallelism between *vv.* 2 and 3. But this parallelism does not exist between *vv.* 3 and 4, and the proposed alteration gives an artificial appearance to the language used. Lastly the conjecture anticipates the statement contained in *v.* 5. The fact that parents were on the point of giving their children in pledge as slaves forms the climax of the complaint. We should not therefore expect to find it mentioned in the present verse.

3. Some *also*] The complaint in this verse is that among the poorer classes, those who had a little property were compelled to mortgage it in order to obtain the bare necessaries of life.

We have *mortgaged*] R.V. **We are mortgaging.** The Hebrew verb expresses a state of things going on at the time.

our lands, vineyards, and houses] R.V. **our fields, and our vineyards, and our houses.** 'Fields' is better than 'lands,' which is too large and general a word. The three words refer to the corn-fields, vineyards, and dwellings, such as the poorer householders might possess.

For the tenacity with which the possession of house or land was retained in a family, cf. 1 Kings xxi. In the Hebrew these three words stand emphatically at the head of the sentence corresponding to 'our sons and our daughters' in the previous verse.

that we might buy corn] R.V. **let us get corn.** The words are the same as in the previous verse. They express not the purpose of the mortgage, but the resolve of the people to obtain food. By mortgaging their property they had lost the little capital they had. They had not the means to pay the interest on the mortgage as well as to obtain food

the dearth. There were also that said, We have borrowed 4
money for the king's tribute, *and that upon* our lands and
vineyards. Yet now our flesh *is* as the flesh of our brethren, 5
our children as their children: and lo, we bring into
bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and
some of our daughters are brought unto bondage *already:*

for their families. The prospect before them was the final loss of property and starvation.

because of the dearth] This might be rendered 'in the famine.' But the sense is hardly different. It was necessary to obtain food in the time of scarcity because of the dearth. Cf. 'through the famine,' Gen. xli. 36.

4. Yet a third class is mentioned, who had been compelled to borrow in order to pay the taxes and, not having the means to pay their creditors, sold their children as slaves.

we have borrowed...for the king's tribute] One special cause of distress seems to have been the heaviness of the royal taxes. Jews who were poor to start with and impoverished by recent circumstances, found themselves under the necessity of borrowing in order to pay the tribute levied by the Persian king from his foreign subjects. See on 'tribute' note on Ezra iv. 13, 20, vi. 8, vii. 24. On the severity of this taxation in the Persian Empire see ix. 37.

and that upon *our lands and vineyards*] R.V. **upon our fields and vineyards.** The poor people, in order to pay the tax, borrowed money upon the security of their small holdings. In this way a considerable portion of the property of the poorer classes had passed into the hands of the wealthy money-lenders, who exacted high usury (*v.* 11), and had no compunction in plying their trade, and visiting default of payment with seizure of a fellow-countryman's few acres of field and vineyard. At a time when distress was due to the presence of a common foe, this want of generosity and patriotism excited the indignation of the working classes. Even in the more favourable cases, the necessity of paying the interest upon the mortgages deprived the poor Jew of any profits from his holding.

5. *Yet...children*] The argument is, the rich are our brethren; how is it right that our children should be made slaves by our brethren on account of the calamities which ought to fall evenly upon all classes? The rich should share and not make a profit out of the common trouble.

lo, we bring into bondage] i.e. we are on the point of selling as slaves in order to satisfy our creditors.

are brought unto (R.V. **into**) *bondage* already] A few instances of daughters being thus made 'bondservants' had already occurred. It was not contrary to law or custom. The complaint is that the distress arises from public causes, and that the rich creditors make an unfair use of the common crisis.

The Israelite laws upon this subject are not in perfect agreement. The earliest code of law contemplates the case of a Hebrew selling himself to be a 'bondman;' but he is to be released in the 7th year of

neither *is it* in our power *to redeem them;* for other men
6 have our lands and vineyards. And I was very angry when

his service. The special case of a man selling his daughter as a 'bondwoman' is dealt with and certain benevolent conditions imposed (Ex. xxi. 2—6). The Deuteronomic law (Deut. xv. 12—18) is in close agreement with this; it enjoins release to take place in the 7th year, and extends the favourable terms granted in Exodus to the 'female bondservant' so that they should be applicable also to the male.

The Priestly Law (Lev. xxv. 39—41) forbids any Israelite to be made 'a bondservant.' There is no mention of release in the 7th year of service; but a general release is to be granted in the year of jubile (*v.* 41). The Priestly Law contemplates a less rigorous degree of service, but is less favourable than are the other codes in the matter of release.

The present passage does not recognize the distinction between 'the bondservant' and 'the hired servant.' It assumes the condition of things permitted by the law of Ex. and Deut., which is also illustrated by 2 Kings iv. 1; Isai. l. 1; Amos ii. 6, viii. 6; Matt. xviii. 25. The grievance is not so much that children are sold as slaves to Jewish creditors, as that the parents are compelled to resort to this extreme measure in order to pay the high interest exacted by usurers who were their own countrymen. That the extortion and not the slavery is the offence which excited the popular indignation is shown by the measures of relief recommended by Nehemiah in ver. 11. The slavery of countrymen was unworthy of the people, but was not an offence against the Law (see ver. 8).

neither is it *in our power*] The Hebrew idiom here is not common and deserves notice. The literal rendering of the words is sometimes thought to be 'and our hand is not for (*or* to) God (Êl),' 'our hand is not in the place of God, our strength is but human.' But it is more probable that we ought to render 'and it is not for (i.e. within the measure of) the strength of our hand,' the word 'Êl' not being used as a Divine title. For other instances of this idiom see Gen. xxxi. 29; Deut. xxviii. 32; Prov. iii. 27; Mic. ii. 1.

to redeem them] R.V. **to help it.**

for other men, &c.] A general statement, describing the result which seemed inevitable. The poor Jews mortgaged their property. The interest on the mortgages was so high that they could not pay it or were compelled to sell their children into bondage. At this rate it would not be long before the mortgages were all foreclosed, and the property had passed into the hands of 'other' men.

It is clear that the Jews at this time either were not acquainted with the Priestly Law enacting the reversion of property in the 'jubile' year (Lev. xxv. 25—28) or regarded it as a Utopian measure incapable of application to the actual needs of society.

6. *I was very angry*, &c.] Nehemiah's indignation was excited at the excessive usury, which his own brethren and servants required (ver. 10), but still more at the degree to which the brotherhood of Israel was forgotten in days of common peril and of which the sale of

I heard their cry and these words. Then I consulted with 7
myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said
unto them, You exact usury, every one of his brother.

fellow-countrymen for debt (ver. 8) and the alienation of the poor man's inheritance (ver. 11) were the worst symptoms. Cf. Ps. cxix. 53 'Hot indignation hath taken hold upon me, because of the wicked that forsake thy law.'

7. *Then I consulted with myself*] The word in the original belongs to late Hebrew usage, and is only paralleled in the O. T. by the word rendered 'my counsel' in Dan. iv. 27. Literally the clause runs 'then my heart took counsel within me.'

and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers] R.V. **and contended with the nobles and the rulers** (marg. 'Or, *deputies*'). For Nehemiah's use of the expression 'contend with,' see xiii. 11, 17, 25. It denotes the conflict of opinion as well as the administration of reproach. Cf. Jer. ii. 9. 'The nobles and the rulers,' as in ii. 16.

You exact usury, every one of his brother] The reader should refer to the passages in the Pentateuch bearing upon usury. (*a*) Ex. xxii. 25. This passage relates to the dealings between Israelites. The purpose of lending is to assist a brother. Interest is not to be exacted but pledges are permitted. The giving of pledges is regulated by principles of charity.

(*b*) Deut. xxiii. 19, 20. The Deuteronomic law forbids interest upon loans advanced to Israelites, but permits them with foreigners. The principle of brotherhood is upheld in the nation. The rules regulating 'the giving of pledges' are repeated (Deut. xxiv. 10—13).

(*c*) Lev. xxv. 35—37. This law treats only of dealing with Israelites, and prohibits all idea of making gain out of assistance rendered to brethren in distress.

In all three passages, the law contemplates the lending of money to the poor man in distress. The taking of a pledge or security is permitted, but not the exaction of interest from a fellow-countryman. Nehemiah himself exacted interest upon loans (ver. 10). We are not therefore to suppose that his indignation was directed against the practice of usury, but against the hard-heartedness and covetousness of the usurers. Mere denunciation against them for these moral failings would have availed nothing. He wisely puts in the forefront of his expostulation the general statement that the Jews were practising 'usury' against their brethren. He implies that this was contrary to the spirit of the law and to good fellowship. He himself sought to relieve his brethren (ver. 8), but he and his companions had, he confessed, given way to the custom of the time, and had lent on usury, although he had not been exacting in his demands. He and the wealthy professional money-lenders had both done wrong. He had been merciful and they had not. This was the only difference. On the general principle he therefore proposed that all taking of interest from needy fellow-countrymen should be abandoned. His manner of approaching the subject conciliated the rulers, as he associated himself with their wrong-doing.

8 And I set a great assembly against them. And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews, which were sold unto the heathen; and will you even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then
9 held they their peace, and found nothing *to answer*. Also

He benefited the poor by procuring the abolition of usurious transactions. He upheld the charitable principle of the old Israelite law. The violation of it is the subject of rebuke in very different periods. Amos ii. 8; Job xxii. 6, xxiv. 3; Ecclus. xiii. 22, 23.

That the strict law of Israel forbade taking upon usury is shown by a comparison of such passages as Ps. xv. 5, xxxvii. 26; Prov. xxviii. 8; Ezek. xviii. 8, 13, 17, xxii. 12. But that these passages as well as the laws in Ex., Lev., Deut. refer primarily to usury upon charitable loans seems probable. Usury as a legitimate financial transaction between Jews seems to have been recognized by the Jews (cf. Matt. xxv. 27); but in the Talmud it is forbidden.

And I set a great assembly] R.V. **And I held a great assembly.** 'Assembly.' The word here used occurs elsewhere only in Deut. xxxiii. 4, 'the assembly of Jacob.' Nehemiah's object probably was to give a public hearing to the complaints, and by the largeness and importance of the meeting to establish beyond controversy an arrangement which was calculated to meet with disapprobation from an influential class.

8. *We*] 'We' and 'ye' in this verse are in emphatic antithesis.

after our ability] So Vulg. 'secundum possibilitatem nostram.' LXX. ἐν ἐκουσίῳ ἡμῶν. Another rendering is 'according to the number of those that were among us.'

have redeemed] R.V. marg. 'Heb. *bought*', i.e. as many as were put up to sale we redeemed. Nehemiah apparently refers to what had been the merciful custom of himself and his countrymen when they were in exile; but possibly also to his action in Jerusalem since his arrival. The word for 'redeemed' here would be literally rendered 'acquired' or 'bought.' The word is used here presumably because the stress of the clause rests not so much on the slavery from which the Jews were delivered, but upon the price that Nehemiah and his companions willingly paid for them.

unto the heathen] Lit. 'unto the nations.'

and will you even sell your brethren] R.V. **and would ye**, &c.

or shall they] R.V. **and should they.** Nehemiah's indignant question contrasts the conduct of the wealthy money-lenders with his own practice and that of his friends. He in a foreign land redeemed every Jew he could that was being sold to the heathen, and here in Jerusalem itself he finds Jews selling their own flesh and blood, and the market in which they barter their brethren is within the walls of the Holy City. They not only sold Jews as slaves, but bought them as such. They were ready to buy them, not to redeem but to enslave them.

found nothing to answer] R.V. **found never a word.** There was no

I said, It *is* not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies? I likewise, *and* my brethren, and my ser- 10

justification either in law or equity for their conduct, in making money out of their brethren's misfortunes at a time of national danger.

9. *Also I said*] 'And I said.' The C'thib in the Hebrew text (which is probably due to an error of transcription) gives the meaning 'and it was said,' i.e. by Nehemiah. The rendering 'and I said' follows the reading of the K'ri, LXX., Vulg.

It is *not good that ye do*] R.V. **The thing that ye do is not good.** The R.V. rendering is in itself preferable to that of the A.V. In addition it enables the English reader to recognize the exact correspondence of this clause with words in Ex. xviii. 17. The sentence is so simple that too much must not be made of the resemblance. But the supposition that Nehemiah's words perhaps unconsciously repeated a familiar sentence from 'the book of the law' is not to be lightly dismissed. That the words of Jethro to Moses should be used by Nehemiah to the money-lenders indicates the courtesy of his expostulation. Fiercer language would have only exasperated them.

ought ye not, &c.] or 'will ye, or should ye, not,' &c.

walk in the fear of our God] This precise phrase does not, apparently, occur elsewhere in the O. T. It condenses the thought of Deut. x. 12, 'And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways,' (cf. viii. 6). We find it in the N. T. in Acts ix. 31, 'The church...walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost was multiplied.' 'The fear of God,' cf. ver. 15. 'The fear of the *LORD*' is the usual expression, espec. in Pss. and Prov. 'The fear of God,' cf. Gen. xx. 11; 2 Sam. xxiii. 3; 2 Chr. xxvi. 5, R.V. Marg. The fear of God's hatred of oppression should be before the eyes of all. Cf. Prov. xiv. 31, 'He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker.'

because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies] Though the general sense is obvious, there is some uncertainty as to the exact shade of meaning to be attached to these words. (1) It may mean 'on account of the reproach wherewith our enemies *have* reproached us; since, so long as we have not walked in the fear of our God, we have been feeble and weak and have deserved the reproach of our enemies. If we walk in His fear, He will bless us and remove the cause of their reproach.' Cf. chap. iv. 4. (2) It may mean 'for fear of incurring the just reproach of our enemies,' seeing that, if they hear of your cruel and ungenerous action to your brethren, they will have good cause to rebuke and ridicule our people. Cf. vi. 13.

'the heathen our enemies.' On 'the heathen' see ver. 8. The two words are only here combined in these books. For 'our enemies' cf. iv. 15, vi. 1, 16. For the general meaning see 2 Sam. xii. 14, 'thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme.' Cf. Isai. lii. 5.

10. *I likewise*, and *my brethren, and my servants*] R.V. **And I likewise, my brethren and my servants.** We must conclude

vants, *might* exact of them money and corn: I pray you,
11 let us leave off this usury. Restore, I pray you, to them, even *this* day, their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth *part* of the money, and *of* the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them.

from this verse that Nehemiah himself lent 'on usury' to his countrymen. The words are not, as A.V., 'I...and my brethren, &c.', but 'I, my brethren, &c.' Nehemiah takes the reply out of the mouth of his opponents. He confesses he is himself not free from blame. For 'his own kinsfolk and dependants' lent 'on usury,' and he their head and representative was responsible for them. They may have been generous and forbearing, but they had violated the principle, which he was upholding: and in so far, Nehemiah accepted the blame of his house. Some suppose that Nehemiah in lending did not require a pledge, and thus differed from the regular money-lenders. 'Brethren,' 'servants.' See note on iv. 23.

might *exact of them money and corn*] R.V. **do lend them money and corn on usury.** The rendering of the A.V. 'might exact' seems to be dictated by the desire to save the honour of Nehemiah and of his house. But the clause does not claim a privilege, but states a fact. By diplomatically accepting the responsibility of a share in the general guilt, he conciliates his hearers and disarms them of a retort. Nevertheless we gather from the clause that it was not so much 'usury' as the abuse of usury, the excessive and tyrannical rate of interest exacted from the poor, which excited his indignation against the rich.

I pray you] These words render a Hebrew particle adding urgency to the request, without introducing the idea of supplication, cf. i. 5. It might be rendered 'Come now, let us leave off, &c.'

let us leave off this usury] Nehemiah invites his hearers to join with him in abandoning a custom which had been productive of such evil results. 'This usury,' i.e. requiring of interest or of pledges. LXX. ἀπαίτησιν. Not the lending but the plan of making a gain out of loans to the poor, whether by demanding interest upon loans or seizing the pledge which had been the security for an advance, is condemned.

11. *Restore, I pray you*, &c.] On 'I pray you' see note on ver. 10. Nehemiah demands immediate redress for the wrongs done to fellow-countrymen. He demands restoration of property and remission of interest on loans.

even this *day*] The same Hebrew word as is rendered in 1 Sam. ix. 13, 'at this time.' Literally='as if to-day,' i.e. 'immediately.'

their lands...houses] R.V. **their fields...houses.** The first part of the demand is the restoration to the poor of the property which had been offered as security for the sums borrowed from the money-lenders.

also the hundredth part, &c.] This 'hundredth part' was in all probability reckoned by month. It corresponded therefore to the Latin 'centesima usura,' and represented interest at the rate of 12 per cent.

corn, the wine, and the oil] This exorbitant rate of interest seems to have been exacted in kind if cash was not forthcoming.

Then said they, We will restore *them*, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest. Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that *they* should do according to this promise. Also I shook my lap, 12 13

The second part of Nehemiah's demand refers to the exaction of interest. It is impossible to suppose that he required the money-lenders to restore the sums which had already been paid in interest. The main verb 'restore' is only by 'zeugma' applicable to 'the hundredth part;' and the meaning is 'do not exact,' 'remit your claim to the 12 p. c. interest which you are accustomed to levy in money or produce of the land.'

His twofold demand, for immediate restoration of property and for future renunciation of interest, corresponds to the twofold reply of the money-lenders in the following verse. It is probable that we are only to understand Nehemiah's intervention to be made in the interests of the poor. The transactions of the wealthy with one another are not contemplated by the early Israelite or the Levitical laws, Ex. xxii. 25; Levit. xxv. 36, 37.

An ingenious conjecture, which alters the text by the insertion of one letter only, would read, instead of 'the hundredth part' (*um'ath*), 'the usury' (*umash'ath*). The latter part of the verse would then only expand in greater detail the substance of the first. The LXX. ἀπὸ follows a different pointing of the word.

12. Nehemiah's audience comply with his request. 'We will restore' refers to the fields, vineyards, oliveyards and houses seized in default of payment or as pledges; 'will require nothing' refers to the usury, i.e. the interest already due upon the sums borrowed.

as thou sayest] R.V. **even as thou sayest.**

Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them] Nehemiah takes measures publicly to bind the money-lenders before the impression had passed away. He summoned the priests to administer the oath. Thus the engagement was undertaken in the presence of public witnesses. The presence of the priests added to the solemnity of the transaction, and was of additional importance, since the priests were entrusted with judicial functions and would have to decide questions between debtor and creditor. On the judicial functions of the priests and their duties outside the Temple cf. xi. 16; 1 Chron. xxiii. 4, xxvi. 29.

took an oath of them] 'Them' refers not to the priests, but to the money-lenders. Nehemiah bound them by an oath which the priest solemnly administered, Ezra x. 5.

according to this promise] 'Promise,' as also in ver. 13; literally 'this word.' The Hebrew language has no distinct word for 'promise,' cf. 1 Kings viii. 56, 'there hath not failed one word of all his good promise' (lit. 'good word'). Ps. cv. 42, 'For he remembered his holy word' (A.V. 'promise'). In Ps. lxxvii. 8, 'Doth his promise fail for evermore?' the expression used is different, and is more like our 'saying' or 'utterance.'

13. *Also I shook my lap*] R.V. **Also I shook out my lap.** (LXX. ἀναβολήν. Vulg. 'sinum'.) The word here rendered 'lap' only occurs

and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the LORD. And the people did according to this promise.

14 Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their

elsewhere in the O. T. in Isai. xlix. 22, R.V. 'bosom,' A.V. 'arms.' Nehemiah here employs a symbolical gesture, suiting his action to his metaphor. He pressed tightly to his body the loose fold of his mantle, so that it hung like a bag or wallet against him; then with a vehement motion of both hands he suddenly stretched it out and shook it in the sight of all the people, so that anything which it might have before concealed would have been jerked violently from him. Even so, he says, may God cast forth from His protection and love, in home and work, the man who fails to abide by the compact. Cf. Job xxxviii. 13, 'That it might take hold of the ends of the earth, and the wicked be shaken out of it.' Is. xxiv. 1. The gesture was rhetorical. It would impress itself upon the audience, and emphasize the speaker's words. For instances of symbolical action comp. 1 Kings xi. 30, xx. 35—43, xxii. 11; Jer. xiii. 1—14, xviii. 1—12, xix. 1—13; Matt. xxvii. 24; Acts xviii. 6.

that performeth not this promise] Lit. 'that fulfilleth or establisheth not this word.' The same phrase in the original as Deut. xxvii. 26, 'Cursed be he that confirmeth not the words of this law to do them.'

from his house, and from his labour] This conjunction of words sounds proverbial, but does not occur elsewhere in the O. T. 'His labour' does not mean so much 'his means of occupation'—the modern idea—as 'the exercise and even the fruits of his industry.' The word used is that found in the expression 'the labour of the hands,' Gen. xxxi. 42; Job x. 3; Ps. cxxviii. 2; Hag. i. 11. Cf. Deut. xxviii. 33, 'The fruit of thy ground, and all thy labours, shall a nation which thou knowest not eat up.'

promise, even thus] R.V. **promise; even thus.**

all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the LORD] The people said 'Amen,' ratifying the curse of Nehemiah and the condition of the contract: they praised the LORD, because the poor had been succoured and the division of the people healed. The 'Amen,' as the people's assent to the ruler's proposition, occurs again viii. 6. Cf. 1 Kings i. 36; 1 Chr. xvi. 36, and Deut. xxvii. 15.

And the people did, &c.] If we may press the distinction between the two words employed, 'the people' in the mass carried into execution the resolutions of 'the congregation,' that had approved Nehemiah's measures.

14—19. NEHEMIAH RECOUNTS OTHER MEASURES BY WHICH AS GOVERNOR HE ENDEAVOURED TO RELIEVE THE CONDITION OF HIS BRETHREN.

14. *Moreover*, &c.] i.e. Here is another instance. During the

governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, *that is*, twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor. But the former governors that *had* 15
been before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of

whole tenure of his office, Nehemiah provided out of his own purse for the expenses of his official position.

from the time..., that is, *twelve years*] Nehemiah was governor or Pekhah of Judah for twelve years, apparently from B.C. 445 or 4 to B.C. 433 or 432, cf. xiii. 6 with ii. 1. See however Additional Note, p. 320.

have not eaten the bread of the governor] i.e. the provisions usually supplied by the province for the maintenance of its Pekhah and his household. 'Bread' of course must not be understood literally. It is explained in the next verse by 'bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver.'

15. *the former governors that* had been *before me*] R.V. **the former governors that were before me.** The governors or Pekhahs here referred to by Nehemiah are those of Jerusalem and the neighbouring district. Zerubbabel was the first. We do not know how many there had been in the interval, nor whether they like Nehemiah were Jews.

were chargeable unto] R.V. marg. 'Or, *laid burdens upon*'. Literally the word means 'made heavy;' and we should expect here some such word after it as 'their yoke' or 'burden,' as in Isai. xlvii. 6. 'Upon the aged hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke.' Lam. iii. 7, 'he hath made my chain heavy.' 1 Kings xii. 10, 'Thy father made our yoke heavy,' and 14; (2 Chr. x. 10, 14); Hab. ii. 6. The object is expressed in the other phrases, 'harden the heart' (Ex. viii. 15, 32, ix. 34, x. 1) and 'make the ears heavy' (Isai. vi. 10; Zech. vii. 11) in which this verb occurs. The only other instance in which this causative word is used absolutely appears to be 2 Chr. xxv. 19, 'to boast.'

had taken of them] R.V. **took of them.**

bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver] 'beside,' R.V. marg. 'Or, *at the rate of*, Or, *afterward*.' The expenses of the governor's table were defrayed at the cost of the province or district. As may be gathered from the R.V. margin, there is considerable doubt with regard to the word rendered 'beside.' Literally the Hebrew runs 'bread and wine, after forty shekels of silver.'

(*a*) The rendering 'beside' of the A.V. and R.V. can hardly be correct. There is no other instance of the use of the Hebrew preposition in this sense; and the addition of the statement 'beside forty shekels, &c.' conveys no meaning without the mention of the time, whether by day, month, or year, at which this extra charge was exacted.

(*b*) The rendering 'afterward,' which is maintained by Keil, is even more improbable. A sentence to the effect that the governors took from the people bread and wine, and afterwards took forty shekels of silver, conveys no intelligible meaning. Keil thinks that it 'expresses

silver; *yea*, even their servants bare rule over the people:
16 but so did not I, because of the fear of God. Yea also I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we *any*

the thought that this money was afterwards demanded from the community for the expenses of the governor's table,' in other words that the governor first exacted the food and then required its value in money.

(*c*) The rendering 'at the rate of' i.e. 'at the price of forty shekels and over,' which is certainly preferable, puts a severe strain upon the simple preposition 'after.' It explains the mention of the forty shekels. The sentence then means that the governor (*daily*, it must be presumed) required provisions to be supplied him by the province, the cost of which was never less than forty shekels.

(*d*) The rendering of the LXX. ἔσχατον ἀργύριον does not help us. The Vulgate 'quotidie' may imply a different reading. The Hebrew for 'one' (ekhâd) could very easily by a copyist's slip be read 'after' (akhar). A very simple conjectural emendation would give us 'bread and wine to the value of, in one day, forty shekels of silver' (='v'yayin yôm ekhâd' instead of 'v'yayin akhar'). Forty shekels of silver would amount to about £5: this sum shows clearly that a rate 'per diem' and not 'per mensem' is indicated.

yea, *even their servants*] Cf. iv. 16, i.e. the governor's household.

bare rule] R.V. marg. 'Or, *lorded over*.' The word probably conveys a sense of arbitrary exercise of authority. Cf. 'have rule' Esth. ix. 1; Eccles. ii. 19, viii. 9.

but so did not I] Nehemiah neither exacted excessive charges from his countrymen as his predecessors in office had done, nor did he presume upon his official position in the way that his predecessors' households had been apt to do. Like St Paul, Nehemiah could say, 'Nevertheless we did not use this right' (1 Cor. ix. 12), and 'In everything I kept myself from being burdensome unto you' (2 Cor. xi. 9).

because of the fear of God] See on ver. 9. Nehemiah defends himself against a false supposition. His motive was not the desire for popularity with his countrymen; but the recognition of the Divine presence in all things quickened his sense of duty. Prov. xvi. 6, 'By the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.'

16. *Yea also I continued in the work*, &c.] R.V. marg. 'Heb. *held fast to*'. It does not appear certain whether Nehemiah here refers to his continuous supervision of the building or to his personal share in the work of restoration at his own cost of some portion of it. The word rendered 'continued' (used in its literal sense of 'held' in iv. 16) admits of either application.

neither bought we any *land*] In connexion with the previous and the following clauses, these words should be taken to mean that Nehemiah and his friends were too strenuously occupied to interest themselves in the purchase of lands. Former governors had possibly made investments in good land. Such transactions were incompatible with Nehemiah's ceaseless devotion to the work. But it is necessary also

land: and all my servants *were* gathered thither unto the work. Moreover *there were* at my table an hundred and 17
fifty of the Jews and rulers, besides those that came unto us

to regard the words as an allusion to the substance of ver. 10. Although they had abundant opportunity to make private gain out of mortgaged property, they withstood the temptation of enriching themselves out of their fellow-countrymen. The word 'land' is the same as that which in the Plur. the R.V. has altered to 'fields' in *vv.* 3, 4, 5, 11.

all my servants were *gathered*] Their work at the wall and in Nehemiah's employ was too incessant to permit of the inspection of purchaseable land or of its proper cultivation if they had purchased it.

17. *Moreover*] Nehemiah mentions another proof of his generosity as governor. He regularly entertained over 150 officials, and welcomed Jewish strangers to his table.

an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers, besides those that came unto us, &c.] The English rendering which seems here to distinguish between 'the Jews' and 'rulers' (or 'deputies'), and to speak of three classes (1) the Jews, (2) rulers, (3) strangers from outside Judæa, may be supported by the traditional interpretation preserved in the Hebrew accents.

From the position here assigned to 'the Jews,' the word, if taken to express a distinct class of the community, must be used of 'the heads of the great Jewish houses or families' (cf. Ezra ii.) as distinct from the administrative officers (see ii. 16). According to this explanation the heads of the houses and the rulers together numbered one hundred and fifty.

It may be questioned whether the expression 'the Jews' would ever be assigned to a section or class of the community. The word is used in ver. 1 and ver. 8 without any such limitation of meaning.

It is perhaps better to take 'the Jews' as the subject of the whole verse. 'Moreover the Jews—I regularly entertained two classes, i.e. the 150 officials and those who had recently left their homes to join their countrymen at Jerusalem.' This is the rendering of the Vulgate, 'Judæi quoque et magistratus centum quinquaginta viri et veniebant ad nos de gentibus.' The repetition of the copula in the Hebrew with 'Jews,' 'rulers,' and 'those' admits of this rendering as in iv. 11.

The large number of the 'rulers' is not an insurmountable objection to this rendering. The central organization of the administration required a great deal of subdivision; and as all the officials were under the governor, he extended his hospitality to all alike.

besides those that came unto us, &c.] By this seems to be intended the somewhat numerous class of Jews, who, having resided among the neighbouring nations detached themselves from time to time, and came to join their brethren in or near Jerusalem. These were Jews, whose forefathers had never been carried captive to Babylon, but had settled in foreign lands either for purposes of trade or from fear of the invader. See note on Ezr. vi. 21.

18 from among the heathen that *are* about us. Now *that* which was prepared *for me* daily *was* one ox *and* six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in ten days store of all *sorts of* wine: yet for *all* this required not I the bread of the governor, because the bondage was heavy
19 upon this people. Think upon me, my God, for good, *according to* all that I have done for this people.

that are *about us*] R.V. **that were round about us.** The past tense is required by the narrative style, which Nehemiah employs.

18. for me *daily*] R.V. **for one day.** Compare Solomon's daily provision, 1 Kings iv. 22, 23.

choice] i.e. picked or chosen for their fatness and good condition. The word in the Hebrew is used of men chosen for a purpose, 1 Chr. vii. 40, ix. 22, xvi. 41. In 1 Sam. ix. 2 Saul is called a 'choice' (R.V. marg.) man.

once in ten days store of all sorts of *wine*] Literally 'within the interval of ten days, of every wine in abundance.' The construction is peculiar. The specification of 10 days and the preposition before 'sorts of wine' lead us to expect the mention of some particular quantity. The conjecture is possible that this was originally expressed by a word denoting a measure, unfamiliar to later copyists, who substituted a general expression for the word. According to the present text, fresh supplies of wine were furnished every ten days, i.e. thrice a month. LXX. ἐν πᾶσιν οἶνος τῷ πλήθει. Vulg. 'Vina diversa et multa alia tribuebam.'

yet for all *this*] Lit. 'with this,' i.e. 'in spite of this heavy outlay.'

required not I] R.V. **I demanded not.** The sense is 'I did not demand my rights.' At the time of the A.V. translation 'to require' was equivalent to 'to ask,' in which sense the A.V. employs it here; see Ezr. viii. 22; Ps. xxxviii. 16 (P.B.V.) 'I have required that they, even mine enemies, should not triumph over me.' The usage of 'require' for 'demanding by authority,' 'making requisition for' (see Wright, *Bible Word-Book*) is more modern. But inasmuch as 'I did not require' could now be understood to mean 'I did not need,' the change to the less equivocal 'demand' is a gain in clearness and accuracy.

the bread of the governor] See ver. 14.

the bondage was heavy, &c.] i.e. the tribute exacted from the Jews by the Persian Imperial government. The word rendered 'bondage' occurs twice elsewhere in this book, iii. 5, 'the work of their lord,' x. 37, 'cities of our tillage.' Used of oppressive 'service' it is familiar to us in Exodus (i. 14, ii. 23, v. 9, &c.).

19. *Think upon me, my God, for good,* according to *all*, &c.] R.V. **Remember unto me, O my God, for good, all,** &c. 'Remember' is the natural translation here and in the similar passages, vi. 14, xiii. 22, 29, 31. The A.V. unfortunately introduced the rendering 'think upon' as a variation. For the use of 'remember' in its application to the Deity, cf. 2 Chron. vi. 42; Judg. xvi. 28; Ps. cvi. 4; Jer. xv. 15. Nehemiah's prayer differs in a measure from the appeal for 'remembrance' in the

Now it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and 6
Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard
that I had builded the wall, and *that* there was no breach
left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors
upon the gates;) that Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, 2

last three of these passages. In these the prayer is that the speaker may not be forgotten and so left in his present distress. Nehemiah prays with frank simplicity that God will recognize and reward his services to the people of Israel. In our ears the self-complacency of the petitions strikes a jarring note. But the words must not be judged by our modern standard. Their quaint candour quite disarms the charge of vanity. It is the ejaculation of a practical man, keenly alive to the responsibility of his position, very conscious of his loneliness, and sensible of the moral effort which it costs him at every fresh endeavour to please Jehovah in the service of the people.

To illustrate the thought cf. Ecclus. xvii. 22, 'The alms of a man are as a signet with him, and he will keep the good deeds of man as the apple of the eye.' Heb. vi. 10, 'For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the love which ye showed toward his name, in that ye ministered unto the saints, and still do minister.'

CH. VI. THE WALL COMPLETED (VER. 15): OPPOSITION FROM WITHOUT (1—9), AND INTRIGUES WITHIN (10—19).

1—9. (*a*) **1—4.** Sanballat and his friends try to inveigle Nehemiah away from Jerusalem;

(*b*) **5—9.** And failing this to play upon his fears by representing him as engaged in heading a rebellious movement.

1. *when S.... and the rest of our enemies, heard*] R.V. **when it was reported to S...., and unto the rest of our enemies.** The R.V. is more literal; the passive verb 'to be reported' occurs in verses 6 and 7, and possibly in chap. xiii. 27. For the spread of previous rumours, cf. ii. 19, iv. 1. 'The rest of our enemies,' probably the representatives of hostile neighbouring communities, cf. iv. 7, where 'the Arabians and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites' are associated with Sanballat and Tobiah.

no breach left] referring to the description in i. 3, ii. 13, iv. 7.

though at that time] R.V. **though even unto that time.** Nehemiah introduces this saving clause for the sake of accuracy. The report was not quite true; the walls were indeed finished, but as yet the gates were not in their places.

upon the gates] R.V. **in the gates,** i.e. in the great fortified gateways. The construction of 'the doors' is mentioned in chap. iii. 3, 6, 14, 15. Why had the doors not yet been 'set in the gates?' Perhaps we are to infer that in the hurry of rebuilding the wall the delicate operation of swinging the heavy metal-covered city doors had been postponed. Temporary barricades would be sufficient to block the approaches. When the work on the wall was finished, the doors would be 'set up' by skilled workmen. To have set them up before would have caused

saying, Come, let us meet together in *some one of* the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief.
3 And I sent messengers unto them, saying, I *am* doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the
4 work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you? Yet

delay in the repair of the walls. In the Assyrian Room (Upper Floor, Case A) of the British Museum are to be seen the bronze coverings of gates found by Mr Rassam at Balawa in 1879, and the pivots on which these gates turned.

2. *Sanballat and Geshem*] It is noticeable that Tobiah's name is not also mentioned. Some commentators have held that this omission is to be accounted for by the fact of Tobiah being 'the mere servant of Sanballat' (see ii. 10). But the explanation seems very improbable when we consider the prominence of Tobiah in ii. 10, 19, iv. 7, vi. 17, 19, xiii. 7, 8, and the way in which his name is mentioned in vi. 12, 14. It is better to suppose that Nehemiah's enemies deputed two of the most crafty of their number to make these overtures for an interview. An invitation to meet and discuss matters with only two of the leaders would wear a friendly and innocent appearance. Perhaps Tobiah and the other conspirators were intended to take advantage of Nehemiah's absence and to make a surprise attack upon Jerusalem.

in some one of *the villages*] R.V. **in one of the villages**. According to this translation the invitation leaves it open to Nehemiah to select the place of meeting. But literally the Hebrew gives 'in the villages (Chephirim)'. It is very possible that this word gives the name of a place (cf. Chephirah, Ezra ii. 25), as Rashi long ago suggested. It is certainly natural to expect that Sanballat and Geshem would name a place for the proposed interview; and the form of the Hebrew word favours this explanation. The proposed meeting-place then would be 'Hacchephirim.'

in the plain of Ono] On Ono, see Ezr. ii. 33 (Neh. vii. 37, xi. 35; 1 Chr. viii. 12). An interview in the plain of Ono would have necessitated Nehemiah's absence from Jerusalem during three or four days. The object of his enemies was doubtless to seize or assassinate him at a distance from Jerusalem.

thought to do me mischief] 'thought' i.e. 'considered how.' Cf. ver. 6, '*think* to rebel.' Gen. l. 20, 'ye *thought* (R.V. *meant*) evil against me.' 'Mischief,' lit. 'evil,' by which expression Nehemiah hints that his foes plotted to assassinate him. Cf. 1 Sam. xxiii. 9, 'Saul devised mischief.' Esth. viii. 3, 'the mischief of Haman the Agagite.'

3. *cease*] 'The great work' of rebuilding the walls was one for which Nehemiah was responsible; and it was no doubt literally true that if he quitted the city there would at once be a cessation in the prosecution of the work. The LXX. misunderstood the last clause, ὡς ἂν τελειώσω αὐτὸ καταβήσομαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς.

4. *Yet*] R.V. **And**. The A.V. suggests the thought which the copula does not express, that in spite of such a rebuff Sanballat and his companions were not daunted.

they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner. Then sent Sanballat his 5
servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand; wherein *was* written, *It is* reported 6
among the heathen, and Gashmu saith *it*, *that* thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words.

after this sort...after the same manner] The Hebrew phrase is the same in both cases. As it occurs again in the next verse (ver. 5, 'in like manner'), though the nature of the message is different, we clearly must not press the words here to mean a literal repetition of the request and answer. It only indicates a general similarity in the character of the four applications, and in the answers which they elicited. Cf. for the use of this phrase 1 Sam. xvii. 27, 30; 2 Sam. xv. 6.

5. *his servant*] Cf. iv. 22.

an open letter in his hand] 'Open,' not sealed. The object of this is obvious. It was intended that the contents of the letter should become public property. The servant himself and the adherents of Sanballat within the walls of Jerusalem (vi. 17) would possess themselves of its contents long before it reached the hands of Nehemiah. (1) The charge of treason against Nehemiah and the Jews would terrify the timid from active co-operation in the work, and decide those who were wavering to desist altogether (cf. ver. 9). The dissemination of the contents of the letter was therefore an attempt to stay the rebuilding of the walls at the last moment. (2) The effect upon the people which the letter was calculated to produce might decide Nehemiah to concede the proposed interview. Sanballat's challenge being made public, it was hoped that Nehemiah would find himself compelled to rebut the charges, and to meet his adversaries in the way which they proposed (ver. 7). Thus the opportunity would be obtained of seizing his person and of employing to their own advantage the interval of his absence from the city.

6. *among the heathen*] R.V. **among the nations**, i.e. among the nations who surrounded the Jews, and were at this time combined against the Jews under Sanballat's leadership.

and Gashmu saith it] i.e. it is no mere vague rumour. It is asserted by individuals of position and influence. 'Gashmu' is generally assumed to be identical with Geshem (ch. ii. 19, vi. 1, 2). It is very probable that the difference of pronunciation preserves a variation of the Arabian dialect. Compare the interchange of 'Jether' (Ex. iv. 18) with 'Jethro' (Ex. iii. 1).

think to rebel] Cf. the charge in Ezr. iv. 12—16. 'Think,' cf. ver. 2. This is the substance of the first rumour reported 'among the nations.'

thou buildest the wall] This is the first indication of rebellion; and it is to be noted the blame is credited to Nehemiah alone ('thou buildest,' &c.), not to the people.

that thou mayest be their king] R.V. **and thou wouldest be king**.

7 And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at
Jerusalem, saying, *There is* a king in Judah: and now shall
it be reported to the king according to these words. Come
8 now therefore, and let us take counsel together. Then I

The words might be rendered 'and thou art becoming their king.' The A.V. is wrong in making the words depend upon the previous clause. They represent the second rumour reported 'among the nations,' that Nehemiah, if not actually king, was on the point of becoming so.

according to these words] A peculiar and unexpected termination to the sentence which recurs in the following verse. According to Rashi the expression refers back to the opening words of the letter, 'It is reported;' and the majority of commentators take the same view, considering it equivalent to 'according to the tenour of these reports.' Another explanation, which is more probable, regards it as a technical expression equivalent to 'and so forth,' '&c. &c.', inserted to abbreviate the extract from the letter. If so, it should be compared with the phrase 'and so forth' in Ezr. iv. 10, 11, 17. Accepting this explanation, the phrase may be Nehemiah's, to save himself the transcript of a long letter. But it may also have been inserted by Sanballat himself in the original letter. A general '&c. &c.' would suggest that there were other similar reports in the background, which he did not at present choose to particularize.

7. *thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee*] There were doubtless prophets in Jerusalem who supported Nehemiah as well as prophets who opposed him (vers. 10—14). Sanballat suggests firstly that Nehemiah had bribed prophets to support him, and secondly that their support was of a treasonable nature. Rashi, perhaps jealous of the sacred term 'prophets,' says that the word here denotes 'eloquent' speakers. The prophet Malachi may well have been one of the prophets referred to.

It would be a mistake to attach too much importance to Sanballat's malicious words, or to suppose that they contain a popular misrepresentation of such expressions as Zech. ix. 9, 'Behold, thy King cometh.'

to the king] Implying that the real king Artaxerxes would take summary vengeance for this assumption of royalty by a petty governor.

according to these words] It is natural as in the A.V. and R.V. to take these words closely with 'shall it be reported.' If however, as is not unlikely, the phrase occurs here, as in ver. 6, to summarize this part of the letter, we must place a comma after 'king.' 'Now shall it be reported to the king, and so forth,' i.e. the sentences describing the results of the report and the king's vengeance need not be transcribed at length.

let us take counsel together] As much as to say, we offer you the opportunity of an interview, in the course of which you can clear yourself of these charges which are the talk of every bazaar; and we will do all in our power to contradict them in your name.

sent unto him, saying, There are no such things *done* as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart. For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be 9
weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, *O God*, strengthen my hands. Afterward I came *unto* 10

8. *There are no such things* done] Literally, 'it has not happened or it has not been done according to these words.' Nehemiah contents himself with curtly retorting that there is no sort of foundation for Sanballat's words. The letters of Artaxerxes to 'the governor beyond the river' (ii. 9) were well known to all; Nehemiah could not be a rebel; he had royal and official support for his work. And the assertion that he was currently rumoured to be engaged in an insurrectionary movement was a mere pretence. The very rumour, he replies, is of Sanballat's own making; and such as it is, it has nothing to go upon.

Nehemiah saw that the object of the letter was to damage him in the eyes of the people. Compare Sennacherib's messengers, 2 Chron. xxxii. 18.

thou feignest them out of thine own heart] i.e. your assertion that a rumour of this kind is being circulated is as much your own invention as the statements which you graft upon it. 'Feignest.' The Hebrew word so rendered only occurs elsewhere in the O. T. in 1 Kings xii. 33, 'in the month which he had devised of his own heart.'

9. *For they all made us afraid*] R.V. **For they all would have made us afraid.** The participle in the original does not convey more than that the attempt was made. It does not assert, as the A.V. rendering, that the attempt succeeded. By 'they all' Nehemiah refers to the enemies mentioned in ver. 1. The present verse is his comment upon the whole episode.

saying] i.e. amongst themselves and in their own minds.

Their hands shall be weakened] For this expression cf. Job iv. 3; Isai. xxxv. 3; Jer. xxxviii. 4; 2 Chr. xv. 7. Cf. 'fearful hearts and faint hands' (Ecclus. ii. 12); 'hands that hang down' (Heb. xii. 12).

Now therefore, O God, *strengthen*, &c.] R.V. **But now, O God, strengthen.** Marg. 'Or, *I will strengthen my hands*'. The adversative 'but' is required, since the clause is Nehemiah's reply to his enemies' machinations, which are summarized in the previous sentence. The construction in the Hebrew creates a difficulty in the translation. The words 'O God' are not in the original: the verb 'strengthen' may either be the imperative or the infinitive.

(i) The A.V. and R.V. and the majority of commentators accept the view that the verb is in the imperative, and regard the words as a prayerful soliloquy with which Nehemiah closes his description of this scene. To this rendering it is an objection (1) that the name of the Deity must be supplied in order to make the words intelligible; (2) that even for an interjectional prayer the language is abrupt; (3) that the substance as well as the form of the sentence differs from the interjectional prayers in v. 19, vi. 14.

the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who *was* shut up; and he said, Let us meet

(ii) If the verb be in the infin., the words express Nehemiah's resolution in the face of his difficulties, 'I will strengthen my hands.' There would be no difficulty presented by such a construction if either the infinitive had been preceded by a verb in a finite form, or the subject of the verb had been expressed. But as both those conditions are lacking, the infinitival construction is certainly extremely harsh and unusual. It is strange to find 'a note added, in the form of a soliloquy, to a description of events which had happened at least 12 years before the final publication of these memoirs.'

Somewhat in favour of the latter view is the evidence of the Gr. and Latin versions, which give, 'And I strengthened my hands.' LXX. *καὶ νῦν ἐκραταίωσα τὰς χεῖράς μου.* Vulg. 'quam ob causam magis confortavi manus meas,' and 'But I will strengthen my hands,' Syr. and Arab. It may be contended that the Versions have merely aimed at giving the most probable sense, without facing the grammatical difficulty; and that, if so, their evidence is of little value. On the other hand their unanimity possibly indicates a difference of text at any early time. So far as they only record a traditional interpretation, they are opposed to the view that the words are a prayer. On the whole the rendering of the R.V. margin seems preferable. It is a harsh construction, but with a simple meaning. The explanation of a prayer escapes the difficulty of construction, but creates a greater objection in the ellipse of the Sacred Name. Among the older explanations of this clause there is the very strange one which suggested that Nehemiah's words are addressed to Sanballat, whom he invites to strengthen his hands instead of weakening them in the task of completing the walls. For the phrase 'strengthen my hands,' cf. 1 Sam. xxiii. 16, 'strengthened his hands in God.'

DANGERS FROM WITHIN: FALSE PROPHETS (10—14).

10. *Afterward I came*] R.V. **And I went.** There is no note of time expressed.

Shemaiah the son of Delaiah] Not otherwise known; apparently a priest and a prophet. The name Delaiah occurs in 1 Chron. xxiv. 18 as that of the three-and-twentieth priestly house.

Mehetabeel] R.V. **Mehetabel.**

who was *shut up*] Concerning the meaning of this obscure phrase there is much variety of opinion. (LXX. *καὶ αὐτὸς συνεχόμενος.* Vulg. *secreto.*)

(*a*) According to one view, he was 'shut up' in the sense that he was prevented by ceremonial pollution from mixing in the society of his countrymen or from approaching the Temple. Cf. Jer. xxxiii. 1, xxxvi. 5. Accepting this interpretation, we see in his proposal to Nehemiah the extremity of his alarms real or feigned.

(*b*) According to another view, the expression is metaphorical, and denotes that he was a 'prisoner,' in the sense of being 'possessed by' the prophetic spirit.

together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee. And I 11
said, Should such a man as I flee? and who *is there*, that, *being* as I *am*, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in. And lo, I perceived that God had not sent 12

(*c*) According to a third view, he had shut himself up in his house in order to show by a symbolical action that Nehemiah was prophetically warned to take refuge in some hiding-place. Cf. 1 Kings xxii. 11; Jer. xxviii. 10; Acts xxi. 11.

within the temple...doors of the temple] Shemaiah's proposal is that Nehemiah should hide himself in sacred precincts, where only priests could go. He implies that this advice which he gives as a prophet is sufficient sanction to absolve the act of profanation. The safety of the governor, he seems to say, is of more importance than a detail of ceremonial.

yea, in the night, &c.] The repetition of the clauses has all the ring of poetic parallelism.

'They will come.' The indefiniteness of the oracular utterance does not state who the assassins are.

11. *And I said*] Nehemiah refuses to listen to Shemaiah. (1) He has his duty and position as governor to remember; it is not for him to show the white feather. (2) The proposal to take refuge in the Temple is monstrous; it was forbidden by the Law, which he served, and to trespass upon the domain of the priests was impious in the extreme. (Cf. 2 Chron. xxvi. 16—20.)

Should such a man as I] The governor and the leader of the national movement.

being *as I* am] R.V. **being such as I**, i.e. not a Priest, cf. i. 1, ii. 3, but the Governor responsible for the protection of his countrymen.

would go into the temple to save his life] R.V. marg. 'Or, *could go into the temple and live*'. According to the A.V. and R.V. text the words 'and live' are made to depend upon the verb 'go,' and denote the purpose of the action 'to save his life.' According to the rendering of the R.V. marg., which is more probable, the words 'and live' (cf. Deut. v. 24) are coordinate with 'go,' and represent the main thought of astonished enquiry. The Law declared that the stranger, i.e. 'the layman that cometh nigh shall be put to death,' Num. xviii. 7. Nehemiah's words point to this prohibition, binding against the governor as much as against the poorest of the Israelites. He does not quote a written statute, but appeals to what was generally known and recognised as law.

12. *And lo, I perceived that*] R.V. **And I discerned, and, lo.** The R.V. gives the verb the requisite sense of 'recognition' as in Gen. xxvii. 23, 'he discerned him not.' Not as some commentators 'I considered.' Of a sudden, as it were, Nehemiah distinguishes the man's object. The interjection 'and, lo,' follows after the recognition of Shemaiah's character and intent.

him; but *that* he pronounced *this* prophecy against me:
13 for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. Therefore *was*
he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and
that they might have *matter* for an evil report, that they
14 might reproach me. My God, think thou upon Tobiah
and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the

God had not sent him] The emphasis lies on 'God,' i.e. it was not God that sent him, but Sanballat and his party. Cf. Jer. xxiii. 21, 'I sent not these prophets, yet they ran: I spake not unto them, yet they prophesied.' Nehemiah's words probably refer to the Deuteronomic law about the false prophet that 'speaketh rebellion against God' and seeketh 'to draw thee away from the LORD thy God' (Deut. xiii. 5, 10).

he pronounced this *prophecy against me*] i.e. his prophecy was not on behalf of God to declare a divine message, but to oppose Nehemiah.

for (R.V. **And**) *Tobiah and Sanballat*] The clause is not a parenthetical explanation, but gives the third point which Nehemiah 'discerned' in Shemaiah's action. He had 'discerned' (1) that Shemaiah's message was not of God, (2) that its purpose was hostile to himself, (3) that it was the result of bribery on the part of Tobiah and Sanballat.

This is the first statement that Tobiah and Sanballat were in communication with a party in Jerusalem itself hostile to Nehemiah, cf. 17—19, xiii. 4, 28. 'Tobiah and Sanballat.' The usual order of the names is inverted, it has been suggested, because 'Tobiah was the immediate briber, Sanballat only finding the funds' (*Pulpit Comm.*). More probably, however, his name stands first in this passage because in intrigues with the Jews of Jerusalem (xiii. 4 ff.) he was the more active and dangerous.

hired] Cf. Ezra iv. 5.

13. *Therefore*] R.V. **For this cause.**

and sin] i.e. by transgressing 'the law,' by violating the sanctity of the House of God.

matter *for an evil report*] Literally, 'and that it might be to them for an evil name.' The Vulgate gives the sense generally 'et haberent malum quod exprobrarent mihi.' The LXX. goes wrong, *καὶ γένωμαι αὐτοῖς εἰς ὄνομα πονηρόν*. The phrase 'an evil name' occurs also in Deut. xxii. 14, 19 in the sense 'an evil report.'

Nehemiah would incur 'an evil name' with the priestly class and the strict Jews for consulting his personal safety rather than the sanctity of the law. Such conduct would weaken his hold upon the best people of the nation. Cf. Ps. xxxviii. 16, 'For I said, Lest they rejoice over me: when my foot slippeth, they magnify themselves against me.'

14. *My God, think thou upon*] R.V. **Remember, O my God.** Tobiah's name stands before Sanballat's. Cf. ver. 12.

and on the prophetess] R.V. **and also the prophetess.** Noadiah's name only occurs here. We know from the case of Huldah and Anna that women were sometimes privileged to possess the gift of prophecy

prophetess Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear.

So the wall was finished in the twenty and fifth *day* of 15
the month Elul, in fifty and two days. And it came to pass, 16
that when all our enemies heard *thereof*, and all the heathen

(2 K. xxii. 14; Luke ii. 36). Noadiah seems to have acted with 'the rest of the prophets,' who were probably bribed to intimidate Nehemiah. Sanballat had accused Nehemiah of obtaining popular influence by suborning prophets to support him (ver. 7). Nehemiah's words in this verse show that the religious teachers of the people were divided in mind. The LXX. and possibly the Vulgate regarded 'Noadiah' as masc. (τῷ Νωαδίᾳ τῷ προφήτῃ, 'Noadiæ prophetæ').

Nehemiah's prayer closes this section. Cf. ver. 14, v. 19, and xiii. 14, 22, 31.

15—19. THE COMPLETION OF THE WALL (VER. 15); AND THE IMPRESSION PRODUCED (16): TREASONABLE CORRESPONDENCE (17—19).

15. *Elul*] This month, which is the same as the Assyrian U-lu-lu, corresponds to the end of August and beginning of September. It is mentioned in 1 Macc. xiv. 27. The 25th of Elul would be September 444. Elul, the 6th of the sacred year, was the last month of the civil year.

in fifty and two days] Nehemiah is evidently calling attention to the remarkable rapidity with which the wall was built. But though a remarkable performance, there is nothing incredible in it; and the suggestion to append to the text 'and two years' (so Ewald) would give a period of time strangely at variance with the description of haste and urgency in chap. v. It is true this would nearly agree with Josephus' statement that the wall took two years and four months building; but Josephus's chronology is not to be preferred to our text, when the LXX. and the Vulgate show no variation. We do not know the grounds which Josephus had for giving 'two years and four months;' but even this circumstantial statement disagrees with the proposed reading.

In order to account for the speed with which the wall was built, we must bear in mind, (*a*) that large numbers of people were employed upon the work, and a thorough system of distribution facilitated its execution; (*b*) the walls in many parts probably only required repairing, while the materials for the most part lay all ready to hand: (*c*) Nehemiah and his companions constantly stimulated the people to persevere in the work: (*d*) according to a very reasonable computation, the 40 lots into which the wall (cf. ch. iii.) was distributed averaged about 80 yards apiece, and many lots were omitted in the list.

For another instance of the rapid erection of walls under patriotic stimulus, compare the action of Themistocles and the Athenians (see Grote's *Hist. of Greece*, vol. IV. p. 333 f.).

16. *all our enemies*] Cf. iv. 1, v. 9, vi. 1.

that when...and all the heathen...saw these things, *they*, &c.] R.V.

that *were* about us saw *these things*, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work
17 was wrought of our God. Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto Tobiah, and *the*
18 *letters* of Tobiah came unto them. For *there were* many in Judah sworn unto him, because he *was* the son in law of

when...that all the heathen...feared, and, &c. Marg. 'According to another reading, *saw*'. There is little distinction to be drawn between 'the enemies' and 'the heathen.' The leaders of the hostile races heard, and then the races themselves feared. The reading 'feared,' which is also that of the LXX. ἐφοβήθησαν, and the Vulg. 'timerent,' gives a preferable sense to 'saw.' The distinction in the A.V. between the 'seeing' of 'the heathen' and the 'hearing' of 'the enemies' is quite meaningless, and tells against that reading. The rendering of the R.V. suggests that the news first reached Tobiah, Sanballat and Geshem, and then spread a panic among the Moabites, Samaritans, Arabians, &c.

they were much cast down in their own eyes] A peculiar expression which occurs only in this passage; literally, 'they fell much in their own eyes.' According to the present text, two explanations have been given: (*a*) = 'they were much vexed and disconcerted.' 'To fall in one's eyes' is then to be compared with the 'falling' or 'lowering' of the countenance. Cf. Gen. iv. 5, 6; 1 Sam. xvii. 32. (*b*) = 'they had fallen greatly in their own estimation,' i.e. they despised themselves. In their own eyes, i.e. in their own opinion, their power had received a heavy blow; they had 'fallen,' as it were, and the Jews were exalted.

A different text is followed in the three renderings: (*a*) the LXX. 'And fear fell upon their eyes exceedingly,' καὶ ἐπέπεσεν φόβος σφόδρα ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς αὐτῶν. (*b*) the Vulgate 'et concideren inter semet ipsos' (*bayneyhem* for *b'ay-neyhem*). (*c*) 'And they caused their eyes to fall', with the same meaning as that given in Jer. iii. 12, 'I will not look in anger upon you' (marg. Heb. 'cause my countenance to fall upon you').

this work was wrought of our God] In the completion of the wall the special favour of the God of Israel must have been recognised. What else could explain the unexpected commission from Artaxerxes at the beginning, and the frustration of all the machinations of the enemy? Cf. Ps. cxxvi. 2, 'Then said they among the nations, The LORD hath done great things for them.' For the phrase, cf. Ps. cxviii. 23.

17. *in those days*] i.e. during the whole of this period a treasonable correspondence was carried on between Tobiah and the disaffected Jewish nobles. That these included the family of the High-priest is rendered probable by Chap. xiii. 4.

18. *sworn unto him, because he* was *the son in law of*, &c.] 'Sworn unto him.' LXX. ἔνορκοι...αὐτῷ. It is implied that Tobiah's connexion by marriage ensured him the support of many leading Jews; the conjunction 'because' suggests that the members of a family on welcoming a stranger within their circle, pledged themselves to him by an oath.

Shechaniah the son of Arah; and his son Johanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah. Also they reported his good deeds before me, and uttered 19
my words to him. *And* Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear.

Now it came to pass, when the wall was built, and I had 7
set up the doors, and the porters and the singers and the

It is possible however to give a more general interpretation: many of the nobles conspired with Tobiah, and they had opportunities to meet him on account of his connexion by marriage. In xiii. 4 we find Eliashib the High-priest described as 'allied unto Tobiah.' 'Son-in-law,' or at any rate a relation by marriage.

Shechaniah the son of Arah] R.V. **Shecaniah**, &c. The house of Arah is mentioned in Ezr. ii. 5. Shecaniah was clearly a man of eminence.

Johanan] R.V. **Jehohanan.** The name of Tobiah's son is a compound of which the first two syllables are derived from the sacred Hebrew Name for God. Cf. note on ii. 10.

had taken the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah] R.V. **had taken...to wife.** This Meshullam is mentioned in iii. 4, 30, from which passages we conclude that he was of priestly descent.

19. *reported...uttered*] R.V. **spoke of...reported.** The Hebrew gives the idea of continuous action. They endeavoured to convince Nehemiah that Tobiah's professions of goodwill were sincere. Perhaps too they spoke of the generous way in which he distributed money among the Jews. On the other hand they communicated to Tobiah all that Nehemiah said and did, with the view of supplying him with material for charges against Nehemiah to be made before the Persian king, or for slanders to the Jewish people. The word for 'His good deeds,' or 'virtues,' (*tôbôthâv*) is perhaps a play on the name 'Tobiah.'

Tobiah...in fear] i.e. letters like that of Sanballat quoted above (*vv.* 5—8).

Ch. VII. 1—5. Nehemiah's dispositions for the protection of the City.

1. *the doors*] We saw in vi. 1 that this alone remained to be done to complete the walls. Those who were responsible for the doors are mentioned in iii. 1, 3, 6, 13, 14, 15. Nehemiah's completion of the great work is celebrated by the son of Sirach, 'And among the elect was Neemias whose renown is great, who raised up for us the walls that were fallen, and set up the gates and the bars, and raised up our ruins again' (Ecclus. xlix. 13).

the porters and the singers and the Levites] The 'porters' were a guild whose ordinary duty it was to guard the entrances and defences of the *Temple*. In the unsettled state of affairs, when he was in constant expectation of attacks from without, and was conscious of intrigues going on within the walls, Nehemiah entrusted the protection of the

2 Levites were appointed, that I gave my brother Hanani,
and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jeru-
salem: for he *was* a faithful man, and feared God above
3 many. And I said unto them, Let not the gates of Jeru-
salem be opened until the sun be hot; and while they stand

whole city to this body of trained 'police,' and augmented their force by other available trained bands, i.e. the musicians and the main body of Levites, who assisted the priests in the Temple services. The mention of 'the Levites' generally *after* that of the two special classes is noticeable, but in some measure they were regarded in Nehemiah's time as distinct, cf. xii. 47, xiii. 5—10. They were already a disciplined and organised set of men. The great majority could apparently be relied on to support the policy of Nehemiah and Ezra. Nehemiah put the keeping of the walls into their hand, with the duty of superintending the watch, and of organising a system of sentinel-work among the citizens themselves (*v.* 3). The fact that Nehemiah thus trusted these Levites, and Temple servants, indicates that they sympathised with him in his scheme of a religious constitution for the Jews, which would completely exclude the Samaritan and the foreigner.

2. *my brother Hanani*] cf. i. 2.

Hananiah the ruler of the palace] R.V. **Hananiah the governor of the castle.** On the castle or 'Bira' see ii. 8. The 'governor of the castle' would be an official of great importance, being probably in command of troops for the purpose of keeping order in the city. 'He' refers to Hananiah. Possibly Nehemiah's appointment of two officers to the command of the city corresponds with the mention of the two men in iii. 9, 12, who were 'rulers of half the district of Jerusalem.'

a faithful man, and feared God] cf. Ex. xviii. 21, 'able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating unjust gain.' The Hebrew is noticeable; not absolutely 'a man of truth,' but 'such as only a man of truth is.'

above many] i.e. more than most. LXX. παρὰ πολλούς. Vulg. 'plus cæteris.' The phrase which only occurs here in the O.T. has a very lifelike ring.

3. *I said unto them*] The reading of the C'thib, 'He said,' is clearly wrong. The K'ri is supported by the LXX. and Vulg. 'Them,' Hanani and Hananiah.

until the sun be hot] Vulg. 'Usque ad calorem solis,' i.e. until the sun was high in the heavens; cf. 1 Sam. xi. 9, 'By the time the sun is hot.' The customary practice was to open the gates at sunrise. By this regulation the enemy would be effectually prevented from obtaining any advantage by an entry into the city before the inhabitants were stirring. The LXX. (ἕως ἅμα τῷ ἡλίῳ) did not understand the sentence. Rashi also explains 'until mid-day,' erroneously. The shutting of the gates was a sign of suspicion: cf. the opposite description of security in Isai. lx. 11.

stand by] R.V. **stand on guard.** The meaning apparently is that the gates were to be shut while the regular watch was still on guard. The A.V. 'stand by' refers to Hanani and Hananiah, as if the gates were

by, let them shut the doors, and bar *them:* and appoint watches of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, every one in his watch, and every one *to be* over against his house. Now 4
the city *was* large and great: but the people *were* few therein, and the houses *were* not builded,

And my God put into mine heart to gather together the 5
nobles, and the rulers, and the people, that *they* might be

always to be shut in the presence of the governors. But it would have been an impossibility for the two officers to have been present at the fastening of each gate. The emphasis rests on the word 'while.' The guard of Levites are to be at their post, while the doors were being secured.

shut...bar] LXX. κλείσθωσαν...σφηνούσθωσαν, Vulg. 'clausæ...oppilatæ.' The versions give the general sense. The word rendered 'shut' occurs only here in the O.T. in the mood employed in this verse. The word rendered 'bar' means literally 'to seize.' Hence Rashi explains, 'let them take hold of the doors in order to shut them;' and other interpretations have been 'take hold in order to see whether they were fastened,' and 'take hold of the keys.' But the marginal rendering of the R.V. 1 Kings vi. 10, 'he fastened the house,' will illustrate its usage in the present verse.

appoint watches &c.] It does not appear whether Hanani and Hananiah are the subject or the Levite guards. The verb in the original is in the Infin. Abs. (cf. vi. 9) and expresses the command in general terms (LXX. στῆσον, Vulg. 'posui'). The citizens themselves were to be organised for the defence of the place. Every man was to belong to a particular guardhouse, and take his turn in sentinel duty; and every man also was to be responsible for the protection of his own dwelling.

4. *large and great*] R.V. **wide and large.** The phrase rendered 'wide' (cf. Gen. xxxiv. 21; Judg. xviii. 10) denotes extension on every side; its literal rendering would be 'wide on both hands.'

the people were *few*] The inhabitants of Jerusalem were in Nehemiah's time very few in comparison with what they had been before the captivity, see xi. 1, 2. The number of Jews that had returned with Zerubbabel had been 42360 (Ezra ii. 64; Neh. vii. 66). With Ezra there had come rather more than 1500 (Ezra viii. 1—20). Others had come from time to time. But of the whole number of 50,000 or so, a very large proportion were settled in the country and towns in the neighbourhood, as appears from ver. 73, xi. 25—36, xii. 27—29.

the houses were *not builded*] An expression that cannot be understood literally. The meaning is, there were large open spaces within the walls unoccupied.

5. *my God put into mine heart*] R.V. **my heart.** For this expression see note on ii. 12.

nobles...rulers (R.V. marg. *deputies*)...*people*] cf. ii. 16; iv. 14, 19.

that they *might be reckoned by genealogy*] LXX. εἰς συνοδίας, Vulg. 'ut recenserem eos.' Nehemiah's census seems to be referred to in

reckoned by genealogy. And I found a register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first, and found written therein,

6 These *are* the children of the province, that went up out of the captivity, *of* those that had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away, and came again to Jerusalem and to Judah, every one unto

xi. 1—3, from which passage we gather that the census was a preliminary to measures for replenishing the population of Jerusalem.

5*b*—73*a*. THE REGISTER OF THOSE WHO RETURNED WITH ZERUBBABEL = Ezra ii. 1—70.

a register of the genealogy] R.V. **the book.**

of them which came up at the first] The only natural explanation of these words is that Nehemiah found in the archives of Jerusalem the list of those that accompanied Zerubbabel from Babylon. This seems to be conclusively proved (*a*) by the words in ver. 5, 'I found,' 'who came up at the first,' 'found written therein,' and ver. 7, 'who came with Zerubbabel,' (*b*) by the position of the parallel extract in Ezra ii. 1—70. Nehemiah recognises the national importance of the register and transcribes it into his 'Memoirs;' he had not known of its existence before.

The view that the list in this chapter contains the results of Nehemiah's census which were mistakenly inserted by the Compiler into Ezra ii., rests on the quite insufficient grounds of (1) the mention of the name Nehemiah in ver. 7, (2) the title Tirshatha in ver. 65, (3) the relation of ver. 73 to the events of chap. viii., (4) the apparent omission of Nehemiah's census. But (1) the name Nehemiah (ver. 7) is not necessarily that of the governor of Jerusalem; (2) there is no evidence that the title 'Tirshatha' was appropriated to Nehemiah alone; (3) only the first part of ver. 73 belongs to this extract; the latter part is freely adapted by the chronicler for the purpose of resuming the narrative; (4) traces of Nehemiah's own census may well be recognised in chap. xi.

This long extract illustrates in an interesting manner the method of compilation adopted by Jewish chroniclers.

The double insertion of the list is probably due to its great importance in the eyes of the stricter Jews. It stands first of all in its right place, chronologically, in the narrative (Ezra ii.); it is repeated here in the place which it occupied in the Memoirs of Nehemiah transcribed by the Compiler.

at the first] A general expression, sometimes used in the sense of 'before' 'formerly,' cf. Gen. xiii. 4; 1 Chron. xvii. 9, sometimes in the sense of 'first of all,' Num. x. 13, 14.

6—73. See notes on the parallel passage Ezra ii. 1, &c. The variations are very slight, and are for the most part such as would arise from errors of transcription.

6. *came again to*] R.V. **returned unto.** Ezra ii. 1 has 'carried away *unto Babylon*'; the words 'unto Babylon' have probably been accidentally omitted in transcription.

his city; who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, 7
Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispereth,
Bigvai, Nehum, Baanah. The number, *I say*, of the men
of the people of Israel *was this:*
The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy 8
and two. The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy 9
and two. The children of Arah, six hundred fifty and two. 10
The children of Pahath-moab, of the children of Jeshua and 11
Joab, two thousand and eight hundred *and* eighteen. The 12
children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty and four.
The children of Zattu, eight hundred forty and five. The 13, 14
children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore. The 15
children of Binnui, six hundred forty and eight. The 16
children of Bebai, six hundred twenty and eight. The 17
children of Azgad, two thousand three hundred twenty and
two. The children of Adonikam, six hundred threescore 18
and seven. The children of Bigvai, two thousand three- 19
score and seven. The children of Adin, six hundred fifty 20
and five. The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety and 21
eight. The children of Hashum, three hundred twenty and 22
eight. The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty and 23
four. The children of Hariph, an hundred *and* twelve. 24
The children of Gibeon, ninety and five. The men of 25, 26
Beth-lehem and Netophah, an hundred fourscore and eight.
The men of Anathoth, an hundred twenty and eight. The 27, 28
men of Beth-azmaveth, forty and two. The men of Kirjath- 29
jearim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred forty and
three. The men of Ramah and Geba, six hundred twenty 30
and one. The men of Michmas, an hundred and twenty 31

7. *Azariah*]=Seraiah in Ezra.
Raamiah]=Reelaiah in Ezra.
Nahamani] Not in Ezra.
Mispereth]=Mizpar in Ezra.
Nehum]=Rehum in Ezra.
I say,...was this] R.V. omits.
15. *Binnui*]=Bani in Ezra: cf. Neh. x. 14; 1 Esdr. v. 12.
21—23. *Ater...Hashum...Bezai...Hariph*] In Ezra the order is Ater, Bezai, *Jorah* (=Hariph), Hashum. For Hariph see Neh. x. 19.
25. *Gibeon*]=Gibbar (probably a mistake) in Ezra.
26. *the men of Beth-lehem and Netophah*]='the children of Beth-lehem...the men of Netophah' in Ezra.
30. *Geba*] Some copies of the A.V. have 'Gaba'; but 'Geba' stands in the 1611 edition.

32 and two. The men of Beth-el and Ai, an hundred twenty
33 and three. The men of the other Nebo, fifty and two.
34 The children of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred
35 fifty and four. The children of Harim, three hundred and
36 twenty. The children of Jericho, three hundred forty and
37 five. The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred
38 twenty and one. The children of Senaah, three thousand nine hundred and thirty.

39 The priests: the children of Jedaiah, of the house of
40 Jeshua, nine hundred seventy and three. The children of
41 Immer, a thousand fifty and two. The children of Pashur,
42 a thousand two hundred forty and seven. The children of Harim, a thousand *and* seventeen.

43 The Levites: the children of Jeshua, of Kadmiel, *and* of
44 the children of Hodevah, seventy and four. The singers:
45 the children of Asaph, an hundred forty and eight. The porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, the children of Shobai, an hundred thirty and eight.

46 The Nethinims: the children of Ziha, the children of
47 Hashupha, the children of Tabbaoth, the children of Keros,
48 the children of Sia, the children of Padon, the children of Lebana, the children of Hagaba, the children of Shalmai,
49 the children of Hanan, the children of Giddel, the children
50 of Gahar, the children of Reaiah, the children of Rezin, the
51 children of Nekoda, the children of Gazzam, the children of
52 Uzza, the children of Phaseah, the children of Besai, the
53 children of Meunim, the children of Nephishesim, the children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of

33. *The men of the other Nebo*]='the children of Nebo' in Ezra. Perhaps the word 'other' has come in accidentally from ver. 34. Our list omits 'the children of Magbish 156,' which in Ezra comes between 'Nebo' and 'Elam.'

43. and *of the children of Hodevah*] R.V. **of the children of Hodevah.** Marg. 'Another reading is *Hodeiah*.' See on Ezra ii. 40, iii. 9.

46. *The Nethinims*] R.V. **The Nethinim.**

Hashupha] R.V. **Hasupha.**

52. *Nephishesim*] R.V. **Nephusheshim.** Marg. 'Another reading is *Nephishesim*'. See Ezra ii. 50.

Harhur, the children of Bazlith, the children of Mehida, the 54
children of Harsha, the children of Barkos, the children of 55
Sisera, the children of Tamah, the children of Neziah, the 56
children of Hatipha.

The children of Solomon's servants: the children of 57
Sotai, the children of Sophereth, the children of Perida, the 58
children of Jaala, the children of Darkon, the children of
Giddel, the children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, 59
the children of Pochereth Zebaim, the children of Amon.
All the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants, 60
were three hundred ninety and two.

And these *were* they which went up *also* from Tel-melah, 61
Tel-haresha, Cherub, Addon, and Immer: but they could
not shew their fathers' house, nor their seed, whether they
were of Israel. The children of Delaiah, the children of 62
Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred forty and two.
And of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children 63
of Koz, the children of Barzillai, which took *one* of the
daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite *to* wife, and was called
after their name. These sought their register *among* those 64
that were reckoned by genealogy, but it was not found:
therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood.
And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat 65
of the most holy *things*, till there stood *up* a priest with
Urim and Thummim.

The whole congregation together *was* forty *and* two thou- 66
sand three hundred and threescore, beside their manservants 67
and their maidservants, of whom *there were* seven thousand

55. *Tamah*] R.V. **Temah.**

59. *Pochereth Zebaim*] R.V. **Pochereth-hazzebaim.** 'Of Zebaim' appears in some copies of the A.V.; but 'of' is not in the 1611 edition.

61. also] R.V. omits.

Tel-haresha] R.V. **Tel-harsha.**

fathers' house] R.V. **fathers' houses.**

63. *Habaiah*] R.V. **Hobaiah.**

Koz] R.V. **Hakkoz.**

one *of the daughters*] R.V. a **wife of the daughters.**

64. *were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood*] R.V. **were they deemed polluted and put,** &c. Marg. Heb. *they were polluted from*, &c.

65. *the Tirshatha*] R.V. marg. Or, *governor.*

a priest] Literally 'the priest.' 'With Urim and Thummim.' LXX. ὁ ἱερεὺς φωτίσων. Vulg. 'sacerdos doctus et eruditus.'

three hundred thirty and seven: and they had two hundred
68 forty and five singing *men* and singing *women*. Their horses,
seven hundred thirty and six: their mules, two hundred
69 forty and five: *their* camels, four hundred thirty and five:
six thousand seven hundred and twenty asses.
70 And some of the chief of the fathers gave unto the work.
The Tirshatha gave to the treasure a thousand drams *of*
gold, fifty basons, five hundred and thirty priests' garments.
71 And *some* of the chief of the fathers gave to the treasure of
the work twenty thousand drams *of* gold, and two thousand
72 and two hundred pound *of* silver. And *that* which the rest
of the people gave *was* twenty thousand drams *of* gold, and
two thousand pound *of* silver, and threescore and seven
73 priests' garments. So the priests, and the Levites, and the
porters, and the singers, and *some* of the people, and the
Nethinims, and all Israel, dwelt in their cities; and when
the seventh month came, the children of Israel *were* in their
cities.

67. *two hundred forty and five*] So 1 Esdr. v. 41. Ezra ii. 65 'two hundred.'

68. This verse does not appear in some of the oldest Hebrew MSS., and is not reckoned in the computation of 685 verses assigned to these books in the Massoretic note at its close. The omission, however, is not supported by the parallel passages in Ezra and 1 Esdr., nor by the LXX. and Vulg. If therefore it be an interpolation from Ezra ii. 66, it must have been inserted at a very early date. The alternative is most probable that the omission is the result of an oversight on the part of a copyist, whose eye passed from the 'five' at the end of ver. 67 to that at the end of ver. 68.

70. *And some of the chief of the fathers*] R.V. **And some from among the heads of fathers'** houses. So in ver. 71.

The Tirshatha] The contributions are here described in greater detail than in Ezra.

the treasure] R.V. **the treasury.**

drams] R.V. **darics.** So in verses 71, 72.

five hundred and thirty priests' garments] See note on Ezra ii. 69 for the conjecture 'five hundred pound of silver and thirty priests' garments.'

71. *to the treasure*] R.V. **into the treasury.**

pound] R.V. marg. 'Heb. *maneh*'.

73. some] R.V. **some.** The Heb. gives the partitive idea. (LXX. οἱ ἀπὸ τοῦ λαοῦ. Vulg. 'reliquum vulgus.')

Nethinims] R.V. **Nethinim.**

Part II. RELIGIOUS REFORM.

Ch. vii. 73 *b*.—viii. 12.		The Public Reading of the Law.
	13—18.	The Celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles.
	ix.	The National Confession, preliminary to the Covenant.
	x. 1—29.	The Sealing of the Covenant.
	30—39.	Certain Obligations of the Covenant.

VII. 73 *b*—VIII. 12. The Reading of the Law.

This verse begins a new section in the work. The style alters. The use of the first pers. sing. is resumed in xii. 31. The Compiler has recourse to other material for this narrative. The thread of Nehemiah's Memoir, which was broken off at ver. 5, is therefore not resumed.

and when the seventh month came] R.V. **And when the seventh month was come**. The R.V. gives the right division of the verse. The second clause introduces a new section. Very similar words occur in Ezra iii. 1 after the register of names. The close of the 'register' perhaps contained suitable words with which to resume the narrative in both passages. But possibly the Compiler consciously repeats himself and borrows from Ezra iii. 1, 'the seventh month.' The mention of this date raises the question of the chronology of the following episodes.

The year is not stated. It is not therefore possible to say with certainty that the events described in chap. viii. followed immediately upon the completion of the wall. But, although not stated, this is what is clearly suggested by the compiler of the work. The mention of the 25th of the 6th month (vi. 15) is followed by the narrative of the 1st of the 7th month (vii. 73; viii. 2). As no other year is mentioned, presumably the events are those which occurred in the same year.

The objection which has been raised against this simple view is chiefly based upon the difficulty caused by the strangely sudden reappearance of Ezra. The fact that in 1 Esdras ix. 37 ff. the events here described follow immediately upon the expulsion of 'the strange women' (Ezra ix.) has been by some scholars understood to supply the right order of time. The public reading of the law and the sacred covenant would then have to be placed in the year 457, and 'the seventh month' in the second year after Ezra's arrival. An apparent confirmation of this view is given by Josephus. But the chronology of Josephus in this period is very untrustworthy. Undoubtedly following 1 Esdras, which does not mention Nehemiah, he places Ezra's activity in the generation before that of Nehemiah, and Ezra's death before Nehemiah's arrival at Jerusalem. His treatment of their lives seems to be based on the supposition that they were not contemporaries (see Josephus, *Antiquities*, xi. 5); in § 1, Ezra appears as a contemporary of Joiakim the High-priest, in § 5 his death is mentioned as occurring at the same time as that of Joiakim the High-priest, who was succeeded by Eliashib. It seems fatal to this view that, in order to maintain it, it is necessary to strike out, as later glosses, the mention of Nehemiah's name in viii. 9, x. 1.

8 And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that *was* before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the

1. *into the street*] R.V. **into the broad place.** The open space in front of 'the water-gate' is probably the same as that mentioned in Ezra x. 9, 'and all the people sat in the broad place before the house of God.' Cf. Neh. iii. 26, 'the Nethinim dwelt in Ophel, unto the place over against the water-gate toward the east.' It is generally supposed that this broad place lay between the S.E. precincts of the Temple and the Eastern wall.

the water gate] Cf. iii. 26, xii. 37.

they spake unto Ezra the scribe] 'They spake;' the impersonal plural implies that the whole community expressed the wish through their representative leaders.

Ezra the scribe] Ezra's name occurs here for the first time in our book of Nehemiah. It naturally calls for remark (1) that Ezra's name was not mentioned by Nehemiah among his supporters in the work of rebuilding the walls, (2) that Nehemiah's description of the condition of the people, the oppression of the poor by the rich (ch. iv.) and the intermarriage with the heathen (vi. 18; x. 30; xiii. 23—28) seems to conflict with the idea of the authority which Ezra obtained over the people, Ezra ix. x. Two explanations have been put forward,

(*a*) It is suggested that Ezra, after accomplishing the reforms described in Ezr. ix. x., returned to Babylon; that after an absence of 12 years, he revisited Jerusalem in time to witness the completion of the city walls by Nehemiah, and was requested by the people to renew his former practice of expounding the Law in public.

(*b*) It is suggested that Ezra had never after his arrival in Jerusalem left the city for any prolonged period; but that after his protest against mixed marriages, he had failed to carry his religious reformation any further. The enemies of the Jews and their unpatriotic allies in Jerusalem had frustrated his attempts. The arrival of Nehemiah changed the aspect of affairs. The religious policy of Ezra was once more in the ascendant. The popular enthusiasm excited by the completion of the walls gave the wished for opportunity of publishing the Law to the people. The omission of Ezra's name in Neh. i.—vii. is still a difficulty. But Nehemiah's memoirs, so far as they are excerpted, record only the events and people concerned with the rebuilding of the walls. If Ezra had been present while the work was in progress, we might naturally have expected to find his name among the repairers of the breaches in chap. iii. Perhaps Ezra, being devoted to the study and teaching of the Law, was not reckoned among those most influential for practical purposes. Being also of the high-priest's kindred, he was very probably included among the repairers of the breach identified with the name of Eliashib (iii. 1).

to bring the book of the law, &c.] There is nothing in these words to lead us to suppose that Ezra had before been in the habit of reading the Law to the people. The verse does not record an annual custom

law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel.
And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation 2
both of men and women, and all that could hear with under-
standing, upon the first day of the seventh month. And 3

but an exceptional step, cf. ver. 18. The people saw that their national integrity was safeguarded by city walls; their jealousy for their distinctiveness as 'a peculiar people' was rekindled. Their request to Ezra marked their adoption of his policy, that of keeping the people of Israel separate from the nations upon the basis of their religious life. His policy was that the religious life of the people should be regulated by the Law as contained in certain recognised writings, and should not be dependent upon the tradition of the Priests. The demand for the production of 'the book of the law' is of twofold interest; (1) it testifies to a general knowledge of the existence of a book the contents of which, so far as they are known, agreed substantially with our Pentateuch; (2) the voice of popular acknowledgment set the seal of 'Canonicity' upon the first portion of the Jewish Scriptures[1].

2. *Ezra the priest*] cf. Ezr. vii. 1, 11.

the law] i.e. the book of the law. Cf. 2 Cor. iii. 14 'the old covenant' for 'the book of the old covenant.' The word 'Torah' is here used in the sense, which afterwards became universal, of the written 'Law.'

all that could hear with understanding] lit. 'every one of intelligence to hear and understand,' i.e. all except quite children, cf. x. 28 'all..., their wives and their sons and their daughters, every one that had knowledge and understanding.' The Vulgate 'sapientium' gives a wrong idea.

upon the first day of the seventh month] In the Priestly Laws the first day of the month Tisri was 'the Feast of Trumpets' (see Lev. xxiii. 23—25; Num. xxix. 1—6), a day of 'holy convocation,' cf. *v.* 9; see Ezra iii. 1.

Were the people assembled to celebrate this festival, or were the people summoned on the first day of the month, because the new-moon days were always regarded as sacred in Palestine? Considering that the people were even uninstructed how to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles according to the Law (*vv.* 13—15), it is not likely that they would have been acquainted with the 'feast of trumpets' before the time of the reading of the Law. It is therefore most probable that the special holiness of the day lay in its being the new-moon day of the month in which occurred not only the change of year according to the autumn era but also the most popular of the Israelite festivals, 'the feast of tabernacles.' The observance of the new-moon seems to have been universal among Oriental nations in ancient times. Among the Israelites, it was at all times strictly maintained, cf. 1 Sam. xx. 5; 2 Kings iv. 23; Isai. i. 13, lxvi. 23; Ezek. xxvi. 1, xlvi. 1; Hos. ii. 11; Am. viii. 5; Hag. i. 1; Judith viii. 6; Col. ii. 16.

[1] For a more detailed treatment of this subject I may perhaps be permitted to refer the reader to chap. iv. in my 'Canon of the Old Testament' (Macmillan, 1892).

he read therein before the street that *was* before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people *were attentive* unto the book of the law.
4 And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum,
5 and Hashbadana, Zechariah, *and* Meshullam. And Ezra

3. *before the street*] R.V. **before the broad place.** The 'broad place' was *before* the water-gate; Ezra read *before* the broad place. In each case the preposition seems to mean on the W. side, i.e. *in front of* looking eastward. The Vulgate 'in plateâ.' The LXX. omits the reference to the locality in this verse.

from the morning] R.V. **from early morning.** Marg. Heb. *from the light.* The process of reading 'from morn till midday' is explained in the following verses (4—8). It was not consecutive reading for seven hours. Ezra had others standing by to relieve him: the reading was also interrupted by exposition.

before] R.V. **in the presence of.** A different preposition from that used earlier in the verse.

attentive *unto the book of the law*] Vulgate 'erectæ ad librum.'

4. *a pulpit of wood*] R.V. marg. Heb. *tower.* Literally 'upon a tower of wood.' LXX. ἐπὶ βήματος ξυλίνου, 1 Esdr. ἐπὶ τοῦ ξυλίνου βήματος. Vulg. 'super gradum ligneum:' cf. 'the stairs' on which the Levites stood in ix. 4. The mention of the erection of a platform or tribune which the Jews had erected 'for the purpose' shows that the incident was one of exceptional character. This is the first mention of a pulpit or lectern.

for the purpose] Literally 'for the word,' which not being understood was omitted by the LXX. The Vulg. 'quem fecerat ad loquendum' follows a different vocalization, *l'dhabbêr* for *laddâbhâr.*

Urijah] R.V. **Uriah:** possibly the same as is mentioned in iii. 4. 'Hilkiah,' possibly mentioned also xii. 7. 'Pedaiah' possibly mentioned iii. 25. 'Meshullam' possibly mentioned x. 7.

Malchiah...Hashbadana] R.V. **Malchijah...Hashbaddanah.**

There is a discrepancy respecting the numbers and position of the individuals here mentioned. The Hebrew text and the LXX. mention six names on the right hand, seven on the left: the parallel passage in 1 Esdras gives seven on the right hand, inserting an Azariah between Anaiah and Uriah, but six only on the left, omitting the last name Meshullam. If we retain both Azariah and Meshullam we should have seven on either side; if we reject them both, we should have six on either side. It seems probable that the names are those of Levites. There would be especial appropriateness in the number twelve, symbolizing the union of Israel in obedience to the Law. The conjecture

opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened *it*, all the people stood *up:* and Ezra blessed the LORD, the great 6
God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD *with their* faces to the ground. Also 7

of Rawlinson that they 'were probably the chief priests of the course which was at the time performing the Temple service' is improbable. (1) They were clearly men who could leave the Temple precincts for six or seven hours consecutively. (2) On such an impressive occasion Ezra, if he were attended by priests, would probably have selected either those who represented the principal houses or those who especially supported his religious attitude. (3) Ezra's supporters in this great religious movement seem to have been Laymen and Levites, not Priests. The popularizing of the knowledge of 'the Law' struck a blow at a priestly monopoly. The thirteen names are in one respect of especial interest. They seem to be the names of individuals and not as in *v.* 7 and ch. ix. 4, x. 9 the names of houses or clans, which happened to be represented. The reader should take notice that the high-priest's name is not mentioned on this occasion. If as some critics have supposed, Ezra himself had composed the Priestly Laws, and was now promulgating them for the first time, the high-priest, whose position owed so much of its dignity in later days to those laws, would surely have been mentioned as countenancing Ezra's action. If however, as seems more probable, Ezra was for the first time publishing to the people laws which had hitherto been kept in the priests' hands, we have a possible explanation for the absence of the high-priest and his party, who would regard his action as subversive of their authority.

5. *opened*] i.e. unrolled, cf. Luke iv. 17.

above all the people] i.e. raised above them in his pulpit.

all the people stood up] We need not conclude from these words that they stood during the whole time that the reading went on. Rather 'they rose to their feet,' signifying by this gesture their reverence for 'the law' that was to be read. After Ezra's blessing and the response (*v.* 6), they probably resumed their seats. 'Standing' was sometimes the posture of prayer denoting humility, cf. 1 Sam. i. 26; 1 Kings viii. 22; Luke xviii. 11, 13. In later times it was the attitude adopted during the reading of 'the Law' in the service of the Synagogue.

6. *the great God*] cf. ix. 32; Ezra v. 8. In Nehemiah's own writing it occurs Neh. i. 5.

Amen, Amen] The people's response: see note on v. 13; cf. 1 Chron. xvi. 36.

with lifting up their hands] See note on Ezra ix. 5. Cf. Ps. cxxxiv. 2, 'Lift up your hands to the sanctuary (Marg. Or, *in holiness*) and bless ye the LORD.' 2 Macc. xiv. 34.

worshipped the LORD with their *faces to the ground*] The phrase 'with the face to the earth,' occurs very generally of reverence without the idea of worship; cf. Gen. xix. 1, xlii. 6, xlviii. 12; 1 Sam. xx. 41,

Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the
8 law: and the people *stood* in their place. So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused *them* to understand the reading.

xxiv. 8; 1 Chron. xxi. 21. But it is also used of worship before God, as in Num. xxii. 31; 2 Chron. vii. 3, xx. 18; and compare the expression 'let us worship and bow down,' Ps. xcv. 6; Job i. 20. After this united act of worship they resumed their attitude of attention (*v.* 3).

7. *Also Jeshua* &c.] Of the 13 names here mentioned we find *four*, i.e. Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Hodiah, mentioned among the Levites in chap. ix. 5, and *seven*, i.e. Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Kelita, Hanan, Pelaiah, among the Levites in chap. x. 9—14. Perhaps these *seven* were representative of Levitical houses, whose names they bore; if so, the remaining *six* mentioned here, whose names do not occur again, possibly represented branches of some other Levitical families mentioned under different collective names in chaps. x. and xii. The LXX. here only gives the first three names.

Hodijah] R.V. **Hodiah.**

and the Levites] So the LXX. But 1 Esdr. οἱ Λευῖται, Vulg. 'Levitæ,' omitting the copula which gives the better rendering. The 'copula' if the text is correct, must define the list of names just given in the sense of 'even.' The writer adds that they were Levites. The rendering 'And the Levites' in the sense of 'And all the rest of the Levites' would give a scene of confusion. For the use of the copula = 'even,' cf. *v.* 13. But very possibly the words have been interpolated.

caused the people...the law] i.e. they expounded what Ezra read. We must suppose that only short passages were read at a time.

stood *in their place*] Literally, 'And the people *were* upon their standing.' LXX. καὶ ὁ λαὸς ἐν τῇ στάσει αὐτοῦ. Cf. 2 Chron. xxx. 16, 'And they stood in their place,' xxxv. 10. It will be noticed that in this passage the Levites share with the priests the duty of instructing the people out of the Law; and we are led to infer that this was customary from the Chronicler's statements in 2 Chron. xv. 3, xvii. 8, 9, xxxv. 3. In the Levitical law we only find the priests entrusted with this duty (Lev. x. 10, 11).

8. *So they read*] R.V. **And they read.** The account does not make it clear, whether the Levites were reading at the same time as Ezra, groups being gathered round the different readers, or whether, as we should rather infer, there was one reader who at the first was Ezra himself, and afterward chosen Levites who in succession took his place and relieved him.

distinctly] R.V. marg. 'Or, *with an interpretation*'. On the word see note on Ezra iv. 18. The rendering of the R.V. marg. is sometimes based on the erroneous supposition that the Jews had returned from Babylon speaking Chaldee or Aramaic, and that in consequence the Hebrew of 'the Law' had to be 'interpreted' in the sense of 'translated.'

And Nehemiah, which *is* the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, 9

This would have been necessary in much later times. But in the time of Nehemiah, if we may judge from the writings of Nehemiah and Malachi, the *people's* dialect had not yet undergone the change, which may have begun very soon afterwards. The common misapprehension of our verse arises from the erroneous impression that Chaldee was the language of the 'Chaldeans' spoken in Babylon and there acquired by the Jews. But in Babylon and Babylonia the spoken language was 'Assyrian,' another branch of the Semitic family. The 'Chaldee' of the Bible is the Aramaic or North Semitic dialect. See Introduction, and cf. note on xiii. 24.

The word in the original occurs in Num. xv. 34, 'it had not been *declared* (i.e. made clear) what should be done unto him.' The rendering 'distinctly' means with clearness and precision, for which careful study was required. Some understand 'with an interpretation' in the sense of 'with exposition;' while the possibility of this explanation may be admitted, it is open to the objection that it anticipates the substance of the clause which immediately follows.

distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them *to understand*] R.V. **distinctly; and they gave the sense, so that they understood.** Marg. as A.V. *and caused*, &c. The R.V. gives the right idea of the verse, which consists of two clauses, the one describing the clearness of the public reading, the other the parenthetic comment introduced for the sake of explaining the text.

'gave the sense:' a phrase occurring only here in the O.T. The clause 'so that they understood' is subordinate to, denoting the result of, the previous words 'gave the sense.'

'so that they understood the reading,' so that they understood what was being read. The word for 'the reading' 'hammiq'ra' here used of the public reading, became in later times a technical Rabbinic word for 'Scripture.'

The ancient versions treat the words as an independent clause, 'And the people understood the reading,' (LXX. *καὶ συνῆκεν ὁ λαὸς ἐν τῇ ἀναγνώσει.* Vulg. 'et intellexerunt cum legeretur,') which gives a good sense, but misses the interdependence of the two sentences. It is a mistake to suppose that the R.V. rendering of the two clauses is tautological. The Levites 'gave the sense,' not mechanically, but so that the people grasped its meaning.

9. *Nehemiah, which* is *the Tirshatha*] R.V. **N. which was** &c. On the title here used see note on Ezra ii. 63. Nehemiah in his own 'Memoirs' speaks of himself as 'Pekhah' (cf. v. 14, 15, 18); and in consequence some (e.g. Smend) suggest that the title applied here and in x. 2 to Nehemiah, is a gloss. Others also (see note on *v.* 1) who refer the events described in this chapter to the year 457, consider Nehemiah's name to be an interpolation. But the occurrence of the title is only evidence that we are no longer dealing with the writings of Nehemiah, who would have styled himself 'Pekhah.' The LXX. omits the title: the Vulg. gives *Athersatha*. The supposition that Nehemiah

said unto all the people, *This* day *is* holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept,
10 when they heard the words of the law. Then he said unto them, Go *your way*, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto *them* for whom nothing is prepared: for *this* day *is* holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for

purposely eschews the honorific title 'Tirshatha,' and prefers a more lowly term 'pekhah' is based on an imaginary distinction between the words.

This *day* is *holy*] Both as a new-moon day and as the day on which the Law was read. See note on *v.* 2. It may be doubted whether Ezra could here be referring to 'the Holy Convocation' prescribed for the 1st of Tisri in Lev. xxiii. 24. There is no mention in this context either of the Feast of Trumpets on the 1st, or of the Day of Atonement on the 9th of Tisri.

mourn not, nor weep] The people had broken out into demonstrations of grief. As they listened to the words of the Law, they perceived in how many ways they had violated it. Compare the effect of hearing 'the words of the book of the law' upon Josiah, 2 Kings xxii. 11. It is clear the people generally were ignorant of the requirements of the Law. May we not infer that the priests had kept to themselves the contents of the collections of laws?

10. *Then he said*] Who issued the command, we are not told. Clearly either Nehemiah or Ezra. Some think Nehemiah because as governor he would be the person to issue authoritative directions. But more probably Ezra is intended; for (1) Ezra's name is most conspicuous throughout this whole episode; cf. *vv.* 5, 6; (2) the language used is that of the teacher of the Law rather than that of the practical governor.

eat the fat, and drink the sweet] A proverbial expression, meaning that the occasion was not one of fasting and grief. LXX. φάγετε λιπάσματα καὶ πίετε γλυκάσματα. Vulg. 'comedite pinguia et bibite mulsum.'

send portions &c.] Doubtless with the thought of remembering the poor and needy more especially, as according to the law of Deut. xvi. 14, where the Feast of Tabernacles is described, 'And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and the Levite, and the stranger, and the fatherless and the widow that are within thy gates.' But the allusion seems primarily to be to the custom of interchanging 'portions' on festal occasions, e.g. Esth. ix. 19, 'a day of gladness and feasting, and a good day, and of sending portions to one another,' *v.* 22, 'days of feasting and gladness, and of sending portions one to another and gifts to the poor.' Nabal's churlishness was the violation of an almost sacred rule, 1 Sam. xxv., cf. R. Smith, *Relig. of Semites*. For this custom of open-handed distribution on the occasion of great sacrificial feasts, cf. 1 Sam. ix. 13; 2 Sam. vi. 19; Ezek. xxxix. 17—20.

neither be ye sorry] R.V. **grieved**. LXX. μὴ διαπέσητε. Vulg. 'nolite contristari'. The R.V. gives the same rendering as in *v.* 11.

the joy of the LORD *is* your strength. So the Levites stilled 11
all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day *is* holy;
neither be ye grieved. And all the people went *their way* 12
to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make
great mirth, because they had understood the words that
were declared unto them. And on the second day were 13
gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people,

for the joy of the LORD is *your strength*] R.V. marg. 'Or, *stronghold*'. This joy of the LORD is not the joy of the LORD over Israel; but Israel's joy in her LORD. Israel's joy at her great festivals is based on her confidence that the LORD ever protects her. Gladness in Him is in proportion to the faith in the protection which He gives. The English version is that of the Vulgate, 'gaudium etenim Domini est fortitudo nostra.' The LXX. ὅτι ἐστὶ κύριος ἰσχὺς ἡμῶν omitted to render the somewhat unusual word for 'joy,' which elsewhere occurs in 1 Chr. xvi. 27, Ezra vi. 16. The rendering 'stronghold' in the R.V. marg. gives the more common meaning, cf. Ps. xxxvii. 39, 'He is their stronghold in the time of trouble.' He that rejoices in Jehovah has a strong fortress from which he can repel all adversaries.

11. *Hold your peace*] This expression has been compared with the Latin 'Favete linguis.' It was ill-omened to make use of words or signs of lamentation on a holy day, cf. Hab. ii. 20, 'The LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him;' Zeph. i. 7, 'Hold thy peace at the presence of the Lord GOD:...for the LORD hath prepared a sacrifice, he hath sanctified his guests;' Zech. ii. 13.

12. *send portions*] Cf. ver. 10.

because they had understood the words that were declared unto them] Literally, 'the words which they had declared unto them.' The LXX. ἐγνώρισεν, Vulg. 'docuerat' make it probable that there was a reading 'Which *he* had declared unto them.' What are 'the words' here referred to? Some think that we should understand by them the command of Ezra and the Levites that the people should be joyful (vers. 9—11). But this gives a very limited application, and we should then have expected some other verb like 'obeyed' or 'gave heed to' rather than 'understood.' It will be noticed that the word 'understood' is the same as that used in ver. 8. This supplies the probable interpretation. The people sorrowed (ver. 9) because they had not kept the Law: they now rejoiced because they were able to understand it.

13—18. THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

13. *the second day*] i.e. of the month Tisri, cf. ver. 2.

the chief of the fathers] R.V. **the heads of the fathers' houses.** The leading men of the nation apply to Ezra for further instruction in 'the law.' It will be observed that 'the priests and the Levites' join in this application with the laymen. Are we to suppose that they too were ignorant of the full contents of 'the law'? This is possible, if the contents of 'the law' had hitherto been chiefly known by oral

the priests, and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to
14 understand the words of the law. And they found written
in the law which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that
the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of

tradition or by disconnected writings. If this had been the case and Ezra had made himself master of the complete continuous 'law,' we shall be able to understand the action of 'the priests and Levites.' From the subsequent verses (vers. 14, 15) it appears that Ezra supplied them not so much with profound interpretations of the Law as with statements relative to its contents and positive enactments.

even to understand] R.V. **even to give attention to**. The Hebrew word (*l'haskîl*) denotes intelligent consideration, as in Ps. xli. 1, 'Blessed is he that considereth the poor;' ci. 2, 'I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way' (marg. 'give heed unto'); Dan. ix. 13, 'have discernment in thy truth.' The copula, rendered 'even,' with the infinitive defines the action of the main verb, as in Isai. xliv. 28, 'shall perform all my pleasure: even saying (lit. and to say) of Jerusalem, She shall be built.' This is better than supposing the infinitive to be used for the finite verb = 'and they gave attention.'

14. *And they found written*] The passages in the Pentateuch relating to the Feast of Tabernacles are Ex. xxiii. 16; Lev. xxiii. 39—43; Num. xxix. 12—38; Dt. xvi. 13, 15. The reference here is to Lev. xxiii. and Dt. xvi. For 'found,' cf. xiii. 1; Luke iv. 17.

which the LORD had commanded] R.V. **how that the LORD had commanded**. The A.V. along with the LXX. (ᾧ ἐνετείλατο) understood this first relative clause to be descriptive of 'the law,' as in ix. 14, x. 30; and to this there would be no objection, if it were not followed by a second relative clause. The R.V. is probably right in making the second of the two relative clauses dependent upon the first, and the first dependent upon the main verb 'they found' (so also the Hebrew accents and the Vulgate).

that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month] Of the four passages in the Pentateuch quoted above, which refer to the Feast of Tabernacles, Ex. xxiii. 16 calls it 'the feast of ingathering' and speaks indefinitely of its occurring 'at the end of the year when thou gatherest in thy labours out of the field;' Dt. xvi. 13 calls it 'the feast of tabernacles' (Heb. *booths*) and enjoins its being kept 'after that thou hast gathered in from thy threshing-floor and from thy winepress,' but makes no mention of 'dwelling in booths;' Lev. xxiii. speaks of 'the feast of tabernacles' (Heb. *booths*) being on the 15th day of the 7th month (ver. 34), 'when ye have gathered in the fruits of the land' (ver. 39), calls it 'the feast of the LORD' (ver. 39) and gives the command 'ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are homeborn in Israel shall dwell in booths' (ver. 42); Num. xxix. 12 enjoins the keeping of 'a feast unto the LORD' on the 15th day of the 7th month, but does not refer to the dwelling in booths.

The reference therefore here is to Lev. xxiii. The 'feast of tabernacles' was emphatically *the* feast of the 7th month: cf. Judg. xxi. 19,

the seventh month: and that they should publish and 15
proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go
forth *unto* the mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine
branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and
branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written.
So the people went forth, and brought *them*, and made 16
themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house,
and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God,

21; (? 1 Sam. i. 7, 21); 1 Kings viii. 2, 65, (xii. 32, 33); Is xxx. 29; Hos. xii. 9; Zech. xiv. 16; Ezr. iii. 4. In the present passage the literal rendering would be 'on the feast in the seventh month.'

15. *and that they should publish and proclaim...saying*] In Lev. xxiii. 1, 4 the children of Israel are commanded to 'proclaim the set feasts of the LORD.' The actual words of this verse are nowhere to be found in the Pentateuch. But there is no reason on that account to suppose a corruption in the text, and to read as Houbigant, whom Rawlinson follows, 'And when they heard it, they proclaimed &c.,' a text for which only a slight emendation is necessary. The LXX. puts a full stop at 'Jerusalem,' and begins a new sentence, 'And Ezra said, Go forth.' The fact is that the writer only refers in a general way to the substance of the passage in Lev. xxiii. relating to 'the feast of tabernacles.' The mention of 'Jerusalem' is alone sufficient to show the spirit of free adaptation in which the reference to 'the law' is made. Possibly Jerusalem is mentioned as embodying the Deuteronomic phrase 'the place which the LORD shall choose' in Dt. xvi. 15.

the mount] i.e. the mountain region or hill country of Judah. Not to be restricted to the Mt of Olives.

pine branches] R.V. **branches of wild olive.** Cf. Isai. xli. 19, 'the oil tree' (Marg. Or, *oleaster*). Both the olive (ἐλαία) and the wild olive (ἀγριέλαιος) were conspicuous for their thick foliage; cf. Rom. xi. 17. For 'palms' near Jerusalem cf. Mk. xi. 8, and Jericho 'the city of palms' (Jud. i. 16, iii. 13; 2 Chron. xxviii. 15).

as it is written] The reference is evidently to Lev. xxiii. 40, 'And ye shall take you on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook.' But the quotation only agrees in the general sense. The only words which are found in both passages are 'palm' and 'thick trees' (Ezek. xx. 28). The 'goodly trees' (*'ec hadar*) possibly include 'the branches of myrtle' (*'eley hédas*). The myrtle (cf. Isai. lv. 13; Zech. i. 8, 10, 11) is mentioned with 'the wild olive' in Isai. xli. 19.

16. *So the people went forth*] There were 13 days before the feast, in which to make preparations.

upon the roof of his house] For the use put to the flat roofs of houses in the East cf. Jos. ii. 6; 1 Sam. ix. 25 (Deut. xxii. 8).

in their courts] Eastern houses were generally built in the form of a quadrangle.

in the courts of the house of God] This does not refer only to booths

and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the
17 gate of Ephraim. And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so.
18 And there was very great gladness. Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book

erected by priests and Levites; cf. 2 Chron. xxiii. 5. See Ps. xcii. 13, cxvi. 19, cxxxv. 2. A possible allusion to the celebration of this feast 'in the courts of the house of God' is to be found in Isai. lxii. 9.

the street] R.V. **the broad place.** In the 'broad places' Jews from the country could erect their booths.

the water gate] See note on ver. 3.

the gate of Ephraim] Cf. xii. 39; 2 Kings xiv. 13; 2 Chron. xxv. 23. The gateway probably took its name from the road passing through it which led to Ephraimite territory. It is not mentioned in ch. iii., but see notes on iii. 6—8.

17. *that were come again out of the captivity*] Compare for this expression Ezra vi. 21, 'the children of Israel, which were come again out of the captivity' (*haggôlah*). Here the word for 'captivity' is *sh'bhi* with a possible play on the word for 'that were come again' (*hasshābim*). The fullest description is given in the wording of Ezra viii. 35.

since the days of Jeshua.....done so] It is quite clear that the writer does not mean that the Feast of Tabernacles had never been celebrated 'since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun'; but that the strict observance had not been carried out during all that long period. The emphasis therefore rests on 'done so.' See notes on Ezra iii. 4, &c., where the celebration of this feast by Zerubbabel and Jeshua is described. We gather from Hos. xii. 9, 'I will yet again make thee to dwell in tents, as in the days of the solemn feast,' that tents had been commonly substituted for booths. The character of this sentence may be illustrated by the very similar description of Josiah's Passover, 2 Kings xxiii. 22, 'Surely there was not kept such a passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah,' 2 Chron. xxxv. 18.

'Jeshua.' The only passage in the O.T. where Joshua's name is so spelt; except in the Pentateuch and the book of Joshua, his name is only mentioned in the O.T. in Judges i. 1, ii. 6, 7, 8, 21, 23; 1 Kings xvi. 34.

great gladness] This corresponds to the commands in Lev. xxiii. 40, 'And ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days.' Deut. xvi. 14, 'Thou shalt rejoice in thy feast;' 15, 'And thou shalt be altogether joyful.'

18. *he read*] i.e. Ezra. This is the usual explanation, so also LXX. *ἀνέγνω*. Vulg. 'legit.' According to another interpretation the 3rd pers. sing. is impersonal='and one read,' 'there was reading.'

in the book of the law of God] The command to read at the Feast of

of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day *was* a solemn assembly, according unto the manner.

Tabernacles only applied to the special usage of the Sabbatic year (Deut. xxxi. 10, 11), and it is clear from the context in that passage that Moses in using the words 'thou shalt read this law' (ver. 11) is speaking especially of the Deuteronomic law which he is described as having written and committed to the priests in ver. 9 and 26. It is a mistake therefore to connect this reading of 'the law' by Ezra with any special obedience to Deut. xxxi. 10, 11, unless it be assumed that it was the Sabbatic year, and that the law read was the Deuteronomic law. For neither assumption is there any sufficient warrant. The fact that the reading went on for seven days makes it probable that the whole, or at any rate by far the greater portion, of the Torah was read.

the eighth day] This eighth day was not originally part of the feast, but an extra day commanded by the Priestly Law to be observed as 'an holy convocation' (Lev. xxiii. 36, 39). Its celebration closed, as it were, the festival calendar of the Jewish sacred year. We do not hear of its observance in early times. As we might expect, it is not mentioned in the brief festival notice of Ex. xxiii. 16. In Deut. xvi. 13—17 it is not spoken of, it is only said 'Seven days shalt thou keep a feast.' In 1 Kings viii. 65, 66, we are told that after the Feast of Tabernacles Solomon sent the people away on the 8th day. In the Priestly Law, however, the observance of this 8th day is insisted upon as 'a holy convocation,' 'a solemn assembly,' on which 'no servile work' is to be done, 'the eighth day shall be a solemn rest' (Lev. xxiii. 36, 39). It is interesting, therefore, to take notice that in 2 Chron. vii. 8, 9 the observance of this 8th day is recorded, although not mentioned in the parallel passage, 1 Kings viii. 65, 66. The Chronicler recounts the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles in accordance with his knowledge of the Priestly Law. Our passage agrees with the later observance and with the Priestly Law. The complete disappearance of the originally distinct character of 'the eighth day' is shown in 2 Macc. x. 6 'eight days...as in the feast of tabernacles.'

a solemn assembly (Heb. *a restrain assembly*)] R.V. Marg. 'Or, *closing festival*'. LXX. ἐξόδιον. Vulg. 'collectam.' The Hebrew word *'ᶜâreth* is used technically here and in Lev. xxiii. 36; Num. xxix. 35; 2 Chron. vii. 9, for the day after the Feast of Tabernacles, and in Deut. xvi. 8, for the 7th and last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. With an original sense of 'shutting,' 'packing together,' it is used of 'public gatherings' (Jer. ix. 2), and sacred festivals (2 Kings x. 20; Is. i. 13; Joel i. 14; Am. v. 21), and, in post-Biblical Hebrew, especially of the Feast of Weeks.

the manner] R.V. **the ordinance**. According to the ordinance (*mishpât*. LXX. κρίμα. Vulg. 'ritum') of the Priestly Law (Lev. xxiii. 36). The emphasis of this appeal to authority is perhaps to be explained by the fact that in early times the 8th day had not been observed.

9 Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month the
children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with
2 sackclothes, and earth upon them. And the seed of Israel
separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and con-

Chs. IX. X. The Solemn Covenant.

IX. After the celebration of the 'solemn assembly' on the 22nd of the month Tisri one day's interval is allowed, and on the 24th a special religious function is performed by the whole people, consisting (1) of a humble confession of national sin, (2) of a national covenant to obey the Law. Thus Ezra and Nehemiah availed themselves of the revival of religious enthusiasm to bind the people by a public declaration.

1—5 *a*. The Day of National Humiliation, and its religious services.

It must be admitted that, if the Great Day of Atonement were observed at this time, it is strange that its occurrence in this month was not made use of for the solemn service of confession. Perhaps this was one of the commands of 'the law,' of which the stricter observance as of the Feast of Tabernacles (viii. 17), was now first publicly made known to the people.

1. *in the twenty and fourth day of this month*] i.e. on the second day after the 8th day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

fasting] Cf. Ezra viii. 21, x. 6.

sackclothes] R.V. **sackcloth**. The symbol of sorrow, often of the sorrow of penitence, as in Dan. ix. 3; Jon. iii. 5, 8; 1 Chron. xxi. 16.

earth upon them] For the sign of mourning, earth or dust upon the head, cf. 1 Sam. iv. 12; 2 Sam. i. 2, xv. 32; Job ii. 12.

2. *the seed of Israel*] A more formal and poetical expression than 'the children of Israel.' It does not occur again in these books; but we find it in 2 Kings xvii. 20; 1 Chron. xvi. 13; Ps. xxii. 23, and in Is. Jer. The phrase to be compared with it is 'the holy seed' in Ezra ix. 2 (Esth. x. 3).

separated themselves] See on x. 28; Ezra ix. 2, 3. No stranger was to take part in this national act of humiliation and confession. The 'strangers,' i.e. the heathen who had not joined themselves to the 'holy seed,' and yet resided in Jerusalem, were not permitted to take part in the ceremony about to be described. Some commentators regard the words as describing in anticipation the result of the action taken by the Israelites on this day, as if by their penitence and confession they finally severed themselves from 'the strangers.' But from the position of the verse it is more natural to understand it of a solemn act of separation preliminary to the ratification of the Covenant.

from all strangers] '*b'ney nêkar*,' i.e. 'children of the foreigner,' LXX. ἀπὸ παντὸς υἱοῦ ἀλλοτρίου. Vulg. 'ab omni filio alienigena,' as in Ps. xviii. 45, cxliv. 7, 11; Isai. lx. 10, lxi. 5, lxii. 8; Ez. xliv. 7.

confessed their sins] So in chap. i. 6; and compare a possibly parallel instance of national 'confession,' 2 Chron. xxx. 22, where however there is some doubt whether 'confession' or 'thanksgiving' is intended: cf. Ezra x. 11.

fessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers. And 3
they stood up in their place, and read in the book of the
law of the LORD their God *one* fourth *part* of the day; and
another fourth *part* they confessed, and worshipped the
LORD their God. Then stood up upon the stairs of the 4
Levites, Jeshua, and Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni,

sins, and the iniquities] 'Sin' (*ḥattâth*) denoting 'failure' generally from the right way; 'iniquity' (*'âvōn*), carrying also the sense of 'guilt,' but denoting especially 'crookedness' and 'perverseness' (2 Sam. vii. 14). Both words occur with the verb 'confess;' 'sins,' Lev. v. 5; Num. v. 7; Dan. ix. 20; 'iniquities,' Lev. xvi. 21, xxvi. 40.

3. *stood up*] Literally, 'arose.'

in their place] cf. viii. 7. The people appear to have continued standing where they were for six hours, listening for three hours and worshipping three hours.

and read] the people read. By this we should understand that the people's religious representatives, the Levites, read while the people listened. For 'the book of the law,' cf. viii. 3.

one *fourth* part] R.V. **a fourth part**, i.e. a quarter of the day as opposed to the night; i.e. 3 hours. The time of day is not told us. We may conjecture 9.0 A.M.—12.0, and 12.0—3.0 P.M. to have been the two quarters.

the LORD their God] Characteristic of this section, cf. vers. 4, 5, 7, x. 29, 34.

4. *upon the stairs* (Marg. Or, *scaffold*) *of the Levites*] R.V. **upon the stairs of the Levites.** According to a common but inaccurate punctuation of the A.V., *of the Levites* is applied to the list of names which follows. It refers to the pulpit or stage erected for the Levites, that they might read the Law and conduct the service standing in view of the people. Cf. viii. 4. For the word rendered 'stairs' (LXX. ἀνάβασις. Vulg. 'gradus') compare xii. 37. It more generally appears as 'ascent,' e.g. Jos. x. 10; 2 Sam. xv. 30; Isai. xv. 5.

Jeshua, &c.] See note on viii. 7; cf. x. 9.

Kadmiel] cf. x. 9.

Bani...Bunni...Bani] The repetition of Bani's name is probably due to an error of copyists. The Syriac version for the second 'Bani' reads 'Binnui'; but as in x. 9, xii. 8, Binnui's name comes, as here, between those of Jeshua and Kadmiel, we should here substitute Binnui for the first Bani. The LXX. renders all three names as if the Hebrew in each case had been 'B'nêy' = 'sons of,' reducing the number of proper names in the verse to five (Ἰησοῦς καὶ οἱ υἱοὶ Καδμιήλ, Σεχενία υἱὸς Σαραβία, υἱοὶ Χωνενί). For 'Bunni,' cf. x. 15; for 'Shebaniah,' 'Sherebiah,' cf. x. 12. The names probably represent the chief Levitical houses and not individuals; cf. the mention of Jeshua, Binnui, and Kadmiel in Ezra ii. 40, iii. 9, and of Sherebiah in Ezra viii. 18. But whether the whole house is in each case intended, or a single representative of each house mentioned, we are not told.

Sherebiah, Bani, *and* Chenani, and cried with a loud voice
5 unto the LORD their God. Then the Levites, Jeshua and Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, Sherebiah, Hodijah, Shebaniah, *and* Pethahiah, said,

Stand up *and* bless the LORD your God for ever and

cried with a loud voice] If the names represent houses or families, we can picture to ourselves the platform crowded with the members of eight Levite houses, who burst forth into some well-known Psalm of adoration to the God of Israel. If they are names of individual representatives, we must suppose them to have been deputed to recite or chant a specially prepared form of prayer, in order to direct the worship of the people.

5. *Then*] As in ver. 4, the 'copula'; no very exact sequence of time is implied.

Hashabniah...Hodijah] R.V. **Hashabneiah...Hodiah.** The Levitical names of the previous verse appear here with some variations. Bunni, the second Bani, Chenani disappear; and the names of Hashabneiah, Hodiah, Pethahiah are introduced afresh. The remaining five names are the same in both lists; and this adds to the difficulty in accounting for the variation, for there seems to be no reason for a partial change of *personnel* at this juncture. Very possibly the Hebrew text is in fault.

The LXX. gives only two names, Jeshua and Kadmiel, but its tendency to shorten lists of names (cf. viii. 7) diminishes the value of its testimony in the present instance.

The best way of accounting for the variation is to suppose that the compiler turns at this point to a different source of information, in which there was a slight disagreement in the list of names. The compiler transcribes: he neither corrects nor explains; and the variation is evidence both of his candour and of the general honesty of subsequent copyists.

Stand up] It may be questioned whether these words should be understood literally. Some commentators suppose that the Levites enjoin the people to exchange the kneeling position of prayer for the standing posture of praise. In ver. 2 we are told the people 'stood and confessed their sins,' and in ver. 3 they 'confessed and worshipped the LORD.' Now 'worshipping' is not necessarily 'kneeling.' Prayer and confession are quite consistent with a 'standing position,' cf. viii. 5 and note.

If not taken literally, it must be understood in its common metaphorical sense 'arise,' 'up!' prefacing an appeal to the laity to join in praise with the Levites.

for ever and ever] R.V. **from everlasting to everlasting.** Cf. Ps. xli. 13, 'Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting and to everlasting,' xc. 2, 'even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God,' ciii. 17. The words are connected more appropriately with 'the LORD your God' than with the verb 'bless.' This ascription to the Eternal Jehovah is possibly taken from a familiar doxology in Jewish worship (cf. Ps. xli. 13).

ever: and blessed be thy glorious name, which *is* exalted above all blessing and praise. Thou, *even* thou, *art* LORD 6
alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all *things* that *are* therein, the seas, and all that *is* therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee. Thou *art* the 7

blessed be] R.V. marg. 'Or, *let them bless*'. The rendering 'let them bless' is more literal. The third Pers. Plur. will refer either to the Israelites or, by a more comprehensive thought, to the dwellers of the earth. But the change of person is abrupt and not without awkwardness. It is perhaps due to a quotation from a Doxology; compare a somewhat similar clause introduced in Ps. cvi. 48.

The LXX. rendering introduces the words 'and Ezra said' as a prefix to this clause, as if the whole of the ensuing address were his utterance. No other evidence, however, supports this reading; but it seems to preserve a very probable tradition based on the similarity of this confession to that of Ezra in Ezr. ix.

thy glorious name] Literally, 'the name of thy glory' (*kābôd*) as in Ps. lxxii. 19, 'blessed be his glorious name for ever.' The expression differs very slightly from that in 1 Chron. xxix. 13, 'Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name' (lit. the name of thy glory '*tiphereth*'). The Name is the Being of God made known to man; the glory (*kābôd*) of it is its manifestation (Ex. xxxiii. 18, 22), of which splendour (*tiphereth*) is an accompaniment.

exalted above all blessing and praise] i.e. man can add nothing thereto by the highest blessings or by the noblest praises. He dwelleth in the 'light unapproachable,' cf. 1 Tim. vi. 16. The Hebrew has 'and (or, *even*) exalted:' the LXX. καὶ ὑψώσουσιν ἐπὶ: Vulg. 'excelso in.'

6. *Thou*, even *thou*, art *LORD alone*] R.V. **Thou art the LORD, even thou alone.** The confession opens with a declaration of the unity of the God of Israel. Jehovah alone is: He alone made the worlds and led Israel. Cf. Ps. lxxxiii. 18, 'That they may know that thou alone, whose name is Jehovah (marg. thou whose name alone is Jehovah) art the Most High above all the earth,' Isai. xliv. 6.

made] 'fecisti' not 'creasti,' 'âsah' not 'bara;' no reference to Gen. i. 1, ii. 1.

heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host] For 'the heaven' and 'the heaven of heavens,' cf. Deut. x. 14; 1 Kings viii. 27; 2 Chr. ii. 6, vi. 18; Ps. cxlviii. 4. It denotes 'the heavens' in their plenitude, the clouds, and the wonders of the sky, the stars and the whole sidereal world.

therein] R.V. **thereon.**

therein] R.V. **in them**, giving emphasis to the use of the plural.

preservest] literally, 'givest life to,' 'quickenest;' LXX. ζωοποιεῖς. Vulg. 'vivificas,' an allusion to the continuity of Divine operation in relation to the Universe. Cf. Job xxxiii. 4; John v. 17.

the host of heaven] Does this refer to the stars and the powers of the sky, or to the angelic beings? The words, being separated from the

LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the
8 name of Abraham; and foundest his heart faithful before

phrase, 'all their host' and following upon the mention of the seas and the earth, most probably mean the created spirits, a distinct group of created things, 1 Kings xxii. 19; Ps. ciii. 21.

7, 8. THE PATRIARCH ABRAHAM; THE CHOICE, THE CALL, THE NAME, AND THE CHARACTER OF THE MAN, AND THE COVENANT MADE WITH HIM.

Thou art *the LORD the God*] R.V. marg. 'Or, *O LORD*', i.e. Thou, O Jahveh (Jehovah), art *the* God, as in 1 Kings xviii. 37.

didst choose Abram] The Divine 'choice' is only mentioned here in reference to the calling of Abraham. The selection of the 'chosen people' was the free act of God's love. This thought lay at the root of the covenant relation between Him and Israel; cf. Deut. iv. 37, 'and because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them,' vii. 7, ix. 4—6.

and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees] Ur of the Chaldees is only mentioned here and Gen. xi. 28, 31, xv. 7, and from these passages the present allusion is almost certainly drawn. According to some scholars, 'Ur of the Chaldees' is to be found in S. Babylonia, on the right bank of the Euphrates, and to be identified either with Warka (=Erech, Gen. x. 10) or Mugheir=Uru, one of the oldest Babylonian cities. According to others, it was situate in Northern Assyria, with which would agree the descent of Terah from Aram (Gen. x. 23) and the home of Abraham's kinsfolk being Padan-Aram (Gen. xxv. 20). The latter view is perhaps most favoured by Israelite tradition, cf. Deut. xxvi. 5; Isai. xli. 9. It was Terah who moved from Ur of the Chaldees to Haran; but Jewish tradition always regarded this as the expression of a Divine call to Abraham. Compare Acts vii. 4 with Gen. xi. 31. The Vulgate 'de igne Chaldaeorum' treats 'Ur' as if it were the Hebrew word (spelt with the same consonants) meaning 'light.'

the name of Abraham] The change of the patriarch's name from Abram to Abraham is recorded in Gen. xvii. 5, to which the reference is probably made. That Abram means 'lofty father' and Abraham 'the father of a multitude' is probably only an instance of popular Israelite etymology. 'Abu-ra-mu' is found as the proper name of a man in Assyrian inscriptions; and the change from the shorter to the longer form, is perhaps a return to an older and more venerated form of the name. The precise meaning of the name is of slight moment. The important point to notice is, that the change of name corresponds with the institution of the covenant sign of circumcision. The change of the name was a pledge of the new relation, into which Abraham and his seed passed; cf. 'Jacob' and 'Israel' (Gen. xxxv. 10).

8. *his heart faithful*] The word 'faithful' is of the same root as

thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give *it*, *I say*, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou *art* righteous: and didst see the affliction of our fathers in 9
Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red sea; and shewedst 10
signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land: for thou knewest that

that rendered 'believed' in Gen. xv. 6, 'And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness;' and the phrase here used is derived from that passage, since the same chapter in Genesis also contains a list of the peoples of the land (*vv.* 19—21), that were to be dispossessed by the seed of Abraham according to the Covenant. For the use of this adjective applied to Abraham, cf. Gal. iii. 9, 'they which be of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham.'

the land of the Canaanites] R.V. **the land of the Canaanite,... Hittite**, &c. The *six* nations here referred to, are all Palestinian. From the list in Gen. xv. 18—21, there are here omitted 'the Kenite, the Kenizzite, the Kadmonite, and the Rephaim.' Perhaps only those nations are recorded of which the names were still in use.

to give it, I say, *to his seed*] R.V. **even to give it unto his seed.**

hast performed thy words] Cf. Jos. xxiii. 14, 'Not one thing hath failed of all the good things, which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, not one thing hath failed thereof.'

for thou art *righteous*] The same epithet in the Hebrew is used in ver. 33, 'thou art just,' where the Divinely ordered discipline of the Exile is alluded to. The root idea of 'righteousness' is 'straightness,' that which will not swerve from truth and justice. Jehovah is called 'righteous,' because His rule of the world and of His people Israel is in agreement with the most perfect imaginable standard of justice and truth. Cf. Deut. xxxii. 4; Ps. lxxxv. 13, cxlv. 17; Zeph. iii. 5.

9—11. THE DELIVERANCE FROM EGYPT.

9. *didst see*] R.V. **thou sawest.** The words are probably based on Ex. iii. 7, 'And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people.'

heardest their cry by the Red sea] Cf. Ex. xiv. 10, 'And, behold, the Egyptians marched after them...and the children of Israel cried out unto the LORD.' 15, 'And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me.' In both cases the verb 'cry' is the same root as the substantive here used.

10. *and shewedst signs and wonders*, &c.] This epitome of the history of the Plagues shows acquaintance with Deut. vi. 22, 'And the LORD shewed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his house.' Cf. Ps. cv. 27, cvi. 7, cxxxv. 9.

they dealt proudly against them. So didst thou get thee a
11 name, as *it is* this day. And thou didst divide the sea
before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea
on the dry *land;* and their persecutors thou threwest into
12 the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters. Moreover
thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the
night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way
13 wherein they should go. Thou camest down also upon
mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and
gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes

dealt proudly] Perhaps an echo of the use of the same verb in Ex. xviii. 11, 'yea, in the thing wherein they dealt proudly against them.'

So didst thou get, &c.] R.V. **and didst get.** Not a recapitulation, but the continuance of the description. The Divine visitation upon Egypt is referred to in similar language, Ex. ix. 16, 'And that my name may be declared throughout all the earth;' xiv. 17, 18.

The words of our verse are best illustrated by Isai. lxiii. 12, 'that divided the water before them, to make himself an everlasting name.' 14, 'so didst thou lead thy people, to make thyself a glorious name.'

as it is *this day*] The vivid impression of the deliverance from Egypt is indestructible. The recollection of the nation's sin is referred to in the same way, Ezr. ix. 7.

11. *divide...the dry* land] The description is based on Ex. xiv. 21, 22, xv. 19. The verbal correspondence is striking.

their persecutors thou threwest into the deeps] R.V. **their pursuers thou didst cast into the depths.** The poetical language of the latter part of the verse is drawn from Ex. xv. 4, 5, 'Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea;...they went down into the depths like a stone.'

as a stone into the mighty waters] Cf. Ex. xv. 5, 'like a stone.' 10, 'as lead in the mighty waters.' For the last words cf. Isai. xliii. 16, 'a path in the mighty waters.'

12—21. THE WILDERNESS.

12. *in the day by a cloudy pillar*] R.V. **in a pillar of cloud by day.**

in the night by a pillar of fire] R.V. **in a pillar of fire by night.** See for these words Ex. xiii. 21, 22; Num. xiv. 14. And compare the poetical description in very similar words of Ps. lxxviii. 14, cv. 39.

13. THE SINAITIC LEGISLATION.

13. *mount Sinai*] It will be observed that Sinai, not Horeb, is referred to. The reference is taken from Ex. xix. 18, 'And mount Sinai...the LORD descended upon it....19. Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice.' Deut. iv. 36, 'Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice.' For other references to Sinai cf. Deut. xxxiii. 2; Judg. v. 5.

judgments] R.V. **judgements.** For 'judgements,' 'laws,' 'statutes,'

and commandments: and madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant: and gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and promisedst them that *they* should go in to possess the land which thou hadst sworn to give them. But they and our

14 15 16

'commandments,' cf. Deut. iv. 44, 45, xi. 1, xii. 1, and Ps. cxix. *passim*. 'Right judgements' or 'equitable decisions' (κρίματα εὐθέα, 'judicia recta') opposed to the perversions of justice by partiality or bribery; 'true laws' or 'teachings of truth' (Plur. not as Vulg. 'legem veritatis'), to erroneous teachings. 'Good statutes and commandments' relate, the one to positive enactments upon religious matters, the other to legislation generally.

14. *and madest known...sabbath*] Cf. Ezek. xx. 12. Apparently referring to the fourth Commandment (Ex. xx. 8—11. Cf. xxxi. 16). But it is to be noticed that the observance of the Sabbath is prescribed if not presupposed at the giving of the Manna (Ex. xvi. 23—30) before the arrival at Sinai. The stricter observance of the Sabbath of Jehovah (*thy* sabbath) was a special feature of religious purity, required by the teaching of Ezra and the Scribes, cf. Neh. xiii. 15 (Isai. lvi. 2, lviii. 13). An observance of the Sabbath was perhaps common among Semitic races. It was certainly kept in Assyria. The command to keep the Sabbath *holy* set the stamp of Divine approval upon the native custom.

precepts, statutes, and laws] R.V. **commandments, and statutes, and a law.** 'A law,' i.e. religious instruction as distinguished from positive rules.

Moses thy servant] Cf. **i. 7.**

15. *bread from heaven*] See Ex. xvi. 4, 'I will rain bread from heaven for you.' Cf. Ps. lxxviii. 24, 'and gave them of the corn of heaven.' Ps. cv. 40, 'and satisfied them with the bread of heaven.'

water for them out of the rock] Cf. Ex. xvii. 6. But a closer resemblance is afforded by Num. xx. 8, 'And thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock.' See Ps. cv. 41, 'He opened the rock, and waters gushed out.'

promisedst] R.V. **commandedst.** Heb. 'didst say.' Cf. ver. 24.

sworn] R.V. **lifted up thine hand.** Cf. Num. xiv. 30, 'the land, concerning which I lifted up my hand that I would make you dwell therein.'

16. *But they and our fathers*] The 'and' here seems not to be necessary. It is found, however, in all the MSS., and is represented in all the Versions, and must clearly be retained in the text. As the following verses 17—22 continue to refer to the Mosaic generation, no distinction of meaning can be drawn between 'they' and 'our fathers.' It seems best therefore to regard the 'and' as an instance of the explanatory or exegetical copula. 'They and (=that is to say) our fathers.' Cf. ver. 22.

fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hark-
17 ened not to thy commandments, and refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou *art* a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not.
18 Yea, when they had made them a molten calf, and said, This *is* thy God that brought thee up out of Egypt, and
19 had wrought great provocations; yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of

dealt proudly] Cf. ver. 10. In this verse and in ver. 29 the word is used with reference to the children of Israel, as in Deut. i. 43, 'ye rebelled...and were *presumptuous*.' xvii. 13, 'all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more *presumptuously*.'

hardened their necks] R.V. **neck**. Cf. ver. 17 and 29. For the phrase 'a stiff-necked people' cf. Ex. xxxii. 9, xxxiii. 3, xxxiv. 9; Deut. ix. 6, 13. 'To stiffen' or 'harden the neck' is found in Deut. x. 16, 'Be no more stiff-necked,' 2 Kings xvii. 14, 'they would not hear, but hardened their neck, like to the neck of their fathers.' Cf. Job ix. 4.

17. *in their rebellion appointed a captain*, &c.] Based on Num. xiv. 4, and perhaps representing a tradition that the words 'And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt' were partially carried into effect.

The R.V. marg. runs, 'The Sept. has, *And appointed a captain to return to their bondage in Egypt*.' See Num. xiv. 4. The Sept. (ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ) read b'mizraim for b'miryam. Another proposed rendering instead of 'appointed a captain' is 'turned their attention,' or 'directed their thoughts,' literally 'set their head.'

a God ready to pardon] R.V. marg. 'Heb. *a God of forgivenesses*'. The word for 'forgivenesses' is found only in Dan. ix. 9; Ps. cxxx. 4.

merciful] R.V. **full of compassion**.

and of great kindness] R.V. **plenteous in mercy**.

For these descriptive epithets of Divine mercy cf. *v.* 31; Ex. xxxiii. 19, xxxiv. 6, 7; Ps. lxxxvi. 15, ciii. 8, cxi. 4, cxlv. 8; 2 Chron. xxx. 9; Joel ii. 13; Jon. iv. 2; Nah. i. 3.

forsookest them not] Cf. ver. 31; Ezr. ix. 9.

18—20. The Golden Calf and God's Mercy.

18. *molten calf...Egypt*.] The language is based on Ex. xxxii. 4, '...made it a molten calf, and they said, These be thy gods (marg. This is thy god), O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.'

wrought great provocations] Cf. ver. 26. The same word is rendered 'blasphemies' in Ezek. xxxv. 12.

19. *the pillar of the cloud*] R.V. **the pillar of cloud**. In the original the construction is 'As for the pillar of cloud, it departed not, &c.'

the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go. Thou gavest 20
also thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst. Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the 21
wilderness, *so that* they lacked nothing; their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not. Moreover thou gavest 22
them kingdoms and nations, and didst divide them into

from them] R.V. **from over them.** More literally.

and the way] The LXX. and Vulg. omit the 'and,' as if the clause stood in apposition to the one preceding; even retaining the copula, that is a possible explanation of the words.

According to the Eng. translation 'and the way' is an accusative, having a verb to govern it, supplied by Zeugma from the clause 'to shew them light.'

20. *thy good spirit*] Referring possibly to Num. xi. 17 'And I will take of the spirit which is upon thee and will put it upon them,' 23—29, but mainly to the general Divine teaching of the people, cf. Isai. lxiii. 11, 'Where is he that brought them out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where is he that put his holy spirit in the midst of them?' For the expression 'thy good spirit' cf. Ps. cxliii. 10, Marg. 'Let thy good spirit lead me.'

to instruct] i.e. to make them understand. For the use of the verb 'sakal,' see note on viii. 12; cf. Ps. xxxii. 8, 'I will instruct thee and lead thee in the way which thou shalt go.'

thy manna] The reference here seems to be to Num. **xi. 6—9;** that in ver. 15 had been to Ex. xvi. 14—36.

Similarly 'water for their thirst' refers to the second miraculous gift of water described in Num. xx. 2—8 (not to Ex. xvii. 3—6).

21. The Forty Years in the Wilderness: Preservation.

forty years...so that] R.V. **forty years...and.** The mention of the 40 years and of the fact that 'they lacked nothing' shows that the origin of the clause is to be sought in Deut. ii. 7 'these forty years the LORD thy God hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing.'

their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not] From Deut. viii. 4, 'Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years.' Cf. xxix. 5, 'And I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot.' The language of the Deuteronomist is doubtless hyperbolical. But his words were employed as a proverbial description of Jehovah's protection of His people in the wanderings.

22—25. The Conquest of Palestine: Victory.

22. The Conquest of the Transjordanic territory.

nations] R.V. **peoples.**

corners: so they possessed the land of Sihon, and the land of the king of Heshbon, and the land of Og king of Bashan.
23 Their children also multipliedst thou as the stars of heaven, and broughtest them into the land, *concerning* which thou hadst promised to their fathers, that *they* should go in to
24 possess *it*. So the children went in and possessed the land, and thou subduedst before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them into their hands, with their kings, and the people of the land, that *they* might do with

and didst divide them into corners] R.V. **which thou didst allot after their portions.** Marg. 'Or, *And didst distribute them into* every *corner*'. The difficulty of rendering arises from the word 'pêah'='a corner,' or 'edge,' which the LXX. and Vulg. do not attempt to translate. Used of 'a corner' in such passages as Lev. xix. 9, 27; Am. iii. 12; it is found with a territorial signification, in Num. xxiv. 17 'the corners of Moab,' Jos. xv. 5, xviii. 14, 15, 'the north quarter,' 'the west quarter,' 'the south quarter,' Jer. xlviii. 45 'the corner of Moab.' It does not seem to occur anywhere in a technical sense for 'a lot' or 'an appointed portion.' 'To allot according to corner,' in the sense of 'after their portions' (as the R.V.), may give the meaning of the obscure phrase; but no satisfactory parallel to this use of '*pêah*' occurs in the O. T. This being the case, it is probable that preference should be given to the R.V. marg. 'into every corner,' a translation which renders 'pêah' literally, and explains the Hebrew idiom by the insertion of the word 'every.'

Sihon...Og] The victory over these kings at the battles of Jahaz and Edrei is described in Num. xxi. 21—35. It made the children of Israel masters of the E. bank of the Jordan. Reference to the conquest of these two kings is frequent, e.g. Num. xxxii. 33; Deut. i. 4, iii. 1, &c.; Jos. ii. 10; Ps. cxxxv. 11, cxxxvi. 19, 20. The territory of the two Amorite kings stretched from the river Jabbok in the S. to the Hauran Mts. in the N., and included the district of Argob. In later days it was divided into Iturea, Gaulanitis, Batanea, Trachonitis and Auranitis.

and the land of the king of Heshbon] R.V. **even the land,** &c. The 'copula' is used to define the previous words, cf. ver. 16 'they and our fathers.' viii. 7. The LXX. omit 'and the land' (Σηὼν βασιλέως Ἐσεβών).

23. *multipliedst*] See Deut. i. 10, vii. 3.

as the stars of heaven] The use of this simile may very probably be a reminiscence of the promise in Gen. xv. 5 and xxii. 17. Cf. Jer. xxxiii. 22.

hadst promised] R.V. **didst say.**

24, 25. Possession and Prosperity.

24. *people*] R.V. **peoples.** i.e. the heathen nations (cf. ver. 8).

with their kings] Compare the list of 'the kings of the land whom

them as they would. And they took strong cities, and a fat 25
land, and possessed houses full *of* all goods, wells digged, vineyards, and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness. Nevertheless they were 26
disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought great

Joshua and the children of Israel smote beyond Jordan westward' (Jos. xii. 7—24).

25. *strong cities*] R.V. **fenced cities.** Cf. Deut. ix. 1; Jos. xiv. 12, e.g. Jericho, Ai, and Hebron, but it was a long time before all the cities were reduced. Thus Jerusalem held out until David's reign. (Cf. Jud. i. 8, 21.)

a fat land] i.e. fat soil, 'adamah.' In Num. xiii. 20 the country ('ereç') is spoken of as 'fat' or 'lean.' Cf. Deut. viii. 7—9 for a fuller description of the land's fatness.

full of *all goods*] R.V. **full of all good things.**

wells digged] R.V. **cisterns hewn out.**

The description is almost literally borrowed from Deut. vi. 10, 11, 'great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, and houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and cisterns hewn out, which thou hewedst not, vineyards and olive-yards, which thou plantedst not, and thou shalt eat and be full; then beware lest thou forget the LORD.' A poetical description of the material blessings, into the inheritance of which the Israelites passed, is given in Deut. xxxii. 13, 14.

became fat] Cf. Deut. xxxii. 15, 'Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked,' of the ill effects of luxury and prosperity.

delighted themselves] The Hebrew word occurs only here in the O. T. = 'they luxuriated.' It is from the same root as 'Eden.' LXX. ἐνετρύφησαν.

26. ISRAEL'S DISOBEDIENCE.

26. *cast thy law behind their backs*] R.V. **back.** 'Thy law,' cf. ver. 14. For this phrase cf. 1 Kings xiv. 9; Ez. xxiii. 35, 'Cast me behind thy back,' where the LORD is the speaker. The 'law' of God, which Israel rejected, is not here the ceremonial or even the written law, but the moral and spiritual 'teaching' of Jehovah, of which 'the prophets' were the Apostles from Moses to Malachi.

slew thy prophets] 'Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD,' 1 Kings xviii. 4. Not many instances are recorded. But cf. Zechariah (2 Chron. xxiv. 20—22), Uriah the son of Shemaiah (Jer. xxvi. 20—23). The martyrdoms of Isaiah and Jeremiah belong to Jewish tradition. The deaths of the prophets who laid down their lives for their testimony are referred to in the New Test., cf. Matt. v. 12, xxiii. 29; Acts vii. 52 (1 Thess. ii. 15); Heb. xi. 32 ff.

to turn them to thee] R.V. **to turn them again unto thee,** i.e. to turn

27 provocations. Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest *them* from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of
28 their enemies. But after they had rest, they did evil again before thee: therefore leftest thou them in the hand of their enemies, so that they had the dominion over them: yet when they returned, and cried unto thee, thou heardest *them* from heaven; and many times didst thou deliver them
29 according to thy mercies; and testifiedst against them, that *thou* mightest bring them again unto thy law: yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments, (which if a man do, he shall live in them;) and withdrew the shoulder, and hard-

them back from following after other gods, and to lead them in 'the way wherein they should go' (ver. 19). Not as Vulg. 'ut reverterentur ad te,' (LXX. ἐπιστρέψαι αὐτοὺς πρός σε). The rebellion of Israel was 'a turning back' from Jehovah. Cf. Ps. lxxviii. 57.

wrought great provocations] Cf. ver. 18.

27, 28. The Period of the Judges.

This is narrated without any attempt at detailed treatment.

27. *enemies...vexed*] R.V. adversaries...distressed. The English version cannot reproduce the alliteration of the Hebrew, where 'adversaries,' 'distressed' and 'trouble' have a common root.

thou heardest them] R.V. omit *them*. So in ver. 28. Cf. 'Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place,' 1 Kings viii. 30.

saviours] LXX. σωτηρίας. Vulg. 'salvatores.' By this title the judges are spoken of in Jud. ii. 16, iii. 9, 15. Cf. 2 Kings xiii. 5, 'And the Lord gave Israel a saviour.'

28. *after they had rest*] Cf. 'the land had rest,' Jud. iii. 11, 30, v. 31, viii. 28.

many times] A probable reference to the numerous deliverances effected by the judges as described in the Book of Judges. The LXX. fails to reproduce the thought accurately by ἐν οἰκτιρμοῖς σου πολλοῖς.

29. The Stubbornness of Israel.

29. *testifiedst*] Cf. 2 Kings xvii. 13, 'Yet the Lord testified unto Israel and unto Judah, by the hand of every prophet, and of every seer.'

dealt proudly] Cf. ver. 16.

which if a man do, he shall live in them] Quoted from Levit. xviii. 5, as also in Ezek. xx. 11. Cf. Luke x. 28, 'This do and thou shalt live.'

withdrew the shoulder] R.V. marg. 'Heb. *they gave a stubborn shoulder*'. The metaphor of an ox refusing to submit to the yoke, as

ened their neck, and would not hear. Yet many years 30
didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy
spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: there-
fore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the
lands. Nevertheless for thy great mercies' sake thou didst 31
not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou
art a gracious and merciful God. Now therefore, our God, 32
the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest

applied to Israel, who rejected the service of Jehovah, is familiar to us from Hos. iv. 16; Zech. vii. 11.

hardened their neck] Cf. ver. 17.

30, 31. THE LONG-SUFFERING OF JEHOVAH.

30. *forbear them*] R.V. **bear with them.** The 'many years' here spoken of contain the brief reference to the earlier monarchic period. 'Bear with;' literally 'protract,' 'extend' (LXX. ἤλκυσας. Vulg. 'protraxisti'), as perhaps Jer. xxxi. 3, marg. 'Have I continued loving-kindness unto thee.'

by thy spirit in thy prophets] Cf. Zech. vii. 12, 'The words which the LORD of hosts had sent by his spirit by the hand of the former prophets.' The words do not affirm the Personality of the Divine Spirit, but the Divine revelation to the mind of man, which was spiritual. The Spirit is the agent, the prophets are the channels of Divine communication. Cf. 1 Kings xxii. 24; 1 Pet. i. 10, 11; 2 Pet. i. 21.

the people of the lands] R.V. **the peoples of the lands.** i.e. the heathen, Ezr. ix. 1.

31. *for thy great mercies' sake*] R.V. **in thy manifold mercies.** The emphasis on the variety of the mercy even more than on its magnitude. Cf. Lam. iii. 22, 23, 'It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning.'

thou didst not utterly consume them] R.V. **thou didst not make a full end of them** (LXX. οὐκ ἐποίησας αὐτοὺς συντέλειαν. Vulg. 'non fecisti eos in consumptionem.' For the phrase see Jer. iv. 27, v. 10, 18, xlvi. 28; Ezek. xx. 17. The promise that though grievously humbled, Israel should not be utterly consumed, ever animated the courage of the prophets, cf. Lev. xxvi. 44, 'And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them;' Isai. vi. 13, 'As a terebinth, and as an oak, whose stock remaineth, when they are felled.'

gracious and merciful] The same words in Heb. as ver. 17 'gracious and full of compassion.'

32—35. ISRAEL'S SUFFERINGS IN THE PAST A JUST PUNISHMENT FROM GOD.

32. *our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God*] Cf. note on i.

covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the
33 kings of Assyria unto this day. Howbeit thou *art* just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but
34 we have done wickedly: neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened

5. See Deut. x. 17, 'the great God, the mighty and the terrible.' Dan. ix. 4.

who keepest covenant and mercy] Cf. i. 5.

trouble] R.V. **travail.** The Hebrew word (*t'lāah*) here used is only found in the O. T., Ex. xviii. 8; Num. xx. 14; Lam. iii. 5; Mal. i. 13 (='weariness').

seem little before thee] A humble way of entreating for gracious consideration. The construction is like that of ver. 19 (see note), 'As for all the travail, let it not seem little, &c.'

upon us, on our kings, &c.] The nation is here described under a threefold division, (1) the aristocracy, the king and the nobles, (2) the religious castes, the priestly officials and the prophetic schools, (3) the laity generally, the heads of the houses or fathers and the mass of the nation.

since the time of the kings of Assyria] i.e. since the kings of Assyria first made Israel tributary. When this took place is not known. The first recorded instance in Scripture is that of Menahem and Pekah (2 Kings xv. 19, 24), who submitted to Pul or Tiglath-Pileser II. (745—727 B.C.). But it is evident from the famous 'Black obelisk' that Jehu was among the vassal kings who brought tribute to Shalmaneser II. (842 B.C.). The kings of Babylon, of Egypt and of Persia had exercised the same dominion. Assyria was the typical oppressor; Assyria first carried away Israel into captivity (2 Kings xv. 29, xvii. 23).

33. *just*] The same epithet as that rendered 'righteous' (ṣaddîq) in ver. 8. See also Ezr. ix. 15.

brought] R.V. **come.**

done right] R.V. **dealt truly.** Literally 'truth' (LXX. ἀλήθειαν. Vulg. 'veritatem'), i.e. Thou hast fulfilled thy word both in blessing and punishment: but we have been unfaithful to the covenant. Cf. Dan. ix. 14, 'For the LORD our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth, and we have not obeyed his voice.' The pronoun 'we' is emphatic; the speakers pass from reference to their forefathers, in order to accept for themselves the responsibility of association with the nation's guilt.

34. *neither have our kings*] The construction is the same as in *vv.* 19, 32, 'As for our kings,... they have not.'

kept thy law] Literally 'done thy law,' i.e. carried into practice the Divine teaching. Cf. *vv.* 14, 29.

unto thy commandments and thy testimonies, where*with* thou didst testify against them. For they have not served 35
thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodness that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them, neither turned they from their wicked works. Behold, we *are* servants *this* day, and *for* the land 36
that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we *are* servants in it: and it 37
yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins: also they have dominion over

nor hearkened] Cf. Zech. i. 4, 'But they (your fathers) did not hear nor hearken unto me, saith the LORD.'

didst testify against them] Probably with special reference to Lev. xxvi. and Deut. xxviii.—xxx.

35. *they*] emphatic, i.e. the kings and princes; as distinguished from 'thou' and 'we,' used emphatically in ver. 33.

in their kingdom] Perhaps with a slight touch of irony, since 'their kingdom' was itself God's gift to Israel. The use of the word shows that the 'kings' and 'princes' of ver. 34 are especially referred to.

goodness] Material blessings generally as in ver. 25.

fat land] Cf. ver. 25.

wicked works] The word so translated is used with especial reference to idolatry. Cf. Jer. xxxv. 15, 'Amend your doings,' Zech. i. 6, 'According to our doings, so hath he dealt with us.'

36, 37. ISRAEL'S PRESENT HUMILIATION: HER CHILDREN SLAVES, HER LAND SUBJECT TO FOREIGN KINGS, WHO OPPRESS IT.

36. *servants*] i.e. subject to Persian supremacy. Cf. Ezra's very similar words in his confession, Ezr. ix. 9.

for *the land*] R.V. as for the land.

behold, we are *servants*] Repeated for emphasis. Israel who should have been mistress of the promised land is a bondservant in it.

37. *yieldeth much increase*] Literally 'its produce it maketh in abundance.' The allusion is to the pressure of the tribute exacted for the Persian revenue. Cf. v. 4. See Rawlinson's *Ancient Monarchies*, vol. III., pp. 421—423.

'Besides' money payments 'a payment...had to be made in kind, each province being required to furnish that commodity, or those commodities, for which it was most celebrated....While the claims of the crown upon its subjects were definite and could not be exceeded, the satrap was at liberty to make any exactions that he pleased beyond them....Like a Roman proconsul, he was to pay himself out of the pockets of his subjects; and, like that class of persons, he took care to pay himself highly.'

dominion] R.V. authority. Cf. Deut. xxviii. 33, 'The fruit of thy ground, and all thy labours shall a nation which thou knowest not eat

our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we
38 *are* in great distress. And because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write *it;* and our princes, Levites, *and* priests, seal *unto it.*

up.' Isai. xxvi. 13, 'O LORD our God, other lords beside thee have had dominion over us.'

we are *in great distress*] We must remember that this language of complaint at the severity of the foreign rule and exactions is not the utterance of Nehemiah the king's minister. This portion of the book is not Nehemiah's writing. The words are spoken not by Nehemiah but by Ezra, or by the Levites. The contents of chap. v. show that the effects of the foreign taxation upon the condition of the middle and lower classes were felt very acutely.

38. Chap. x. 1 in Heb.; so Luther. The A.V. and R.V. follow the division of the Vulg. and LXX.

And because of all this] R.V. **And yet for all this.** R.V. marg. 'Or, *because of*'. The relation of this sentence to the preceding confession is not certain. This uncertainty has given rise to the doubt whether chap. ix. should not have closed at ver. 37. The English translation treats the verse as the concluding sentence of the Confession. The A.V. rendering 'And because of all this' refers back to the whole summary of Israelite history (7—37), i.e. 'because of Jehovah's mercy in spite of our disobedience.' The R.V. rendering 'And yet for all this' refers especially to the concluding words, describing the sorrows and afflictions which had come upon the people, i.e. 'And yet in spite of all this oppression our faith in God's mercy is unshaken, and in proof thereof we sign the covenant.' This explanation, which is preferable, seems to derive support from other passages where the same prep. and pron. occur. Cf. Is. v. 25, ix. 12, 'For all this his anger is not turned away.' Job i. 22, 'In all this Job sinned not.'

The view that the verse resumes the narrative of ix. 1—5 is very improbable on account of the use of the 1st pers. plur., which has not been employed in this section (chaps. viii. and ix.).

The Massoretic division into chapters, which begins chap. x. with this verse, severs the connexion with the previous verses. It was perhaps considered that a more considerable break should be introduced between the conclusion of the Confession and the signing of the Covenant. The Massoretes regarded the present verse as Nehemiah's preface to the new section.

sure] R.V. marg. 'Or, *faithful*'. The words 'a sure covenant' render the Hebrew ''emanah,' which elsewhere in the O. T. is only found in Neh. xi. 23, 'a settled provision' (marg. 'a sure ordinance'). The regular phrase for 'making' (lit. 'cutting') a covenant (cf. ix. 8) occurs; and there can be no doubt of its meaning here. LXX. διατιθέμεθα πίστιν. Vulg. 'percutimus foedus.' The Covenant is not between Ezra and the people, but between the people and Jehovah.

our princes, Levites, and *priests*] R.V. **our princes, our Levites,** and **our priests.** The position of the Levites between the 'princes' and the

Now those that sealed *were*, Nehemiah, the Tirshatha, 10
the son of Hachaliah, and Zidkijah, Seraiah, Azariah, Jere- 2

'priests' deserves notice, as it illustrates the prominence of the Levites in the movement.

seal unto it] R.V. marg. 'Or, *are at the sealing*'. The A.V. rendering suggests the idea of a seal being affixed by each of the chief representatives. But the meaning is rather that the document having been prepared and rendered official by the addition of the seal, the leaders of the people were 'upon' the sealed writing, viz. they either appended signatures as witnesses, or made marks to endorse the document and to testify to their approval. In many of the Assyrian tablets, recording business transactions, the marks of the thumb-nails of the witnesses still attest the fact of their presence and approbation.

The National confession (*vv.* 5—38) is thus brought to a conclusion in ver. 38 as abruptly as it was begun in ver. 5. It consists of four portions, (1) ver. 5, the opening ascription; (2) 6—31, the summary of Israel's religious history; (3) 32—37, the prayer of deprecation and submission; (4) 38, the announcement of the national covenant. This strikingly practical termination of the Confession is very characteristic of the movement headed by Ezra and Nehemiah. Repentance is to take shape in immediate action.

The summary of past history should be compared with that in Pss. cv., cvi., cxxxv., cxxxvi. It is expressed for the most part in general terms. The only individuals of the chosen people mentioned by name are Abram (ver. 7), and Moses (ver. 14); but the events recorded in the Pentateuch which are here alluded to are numerous—(1) the call of Abram from Ur; (2) the change of name to Abraham; (3) the covenant with Abraham; (4) the overthrow of Pharaoh and the crossing of the Red Sea; (5) the pillar of cloud and fire; (6) the giving of the law on Mt Sinai; (7) manna; (8) water from the rock; (9) the golden calf; (10) the defeat of Sihon and Og. The possession of the land (*vv.* 24, 25) and the sending of the judges (ver. 27) are mentioned, but with much less definiteness.

It is strange that we have no mention of Joshua, Samuel, David or Solomon. But very probably the reason of the omission is that the contents of the Pentateuch in the age of Nehemiah were alone regarded as sacred Scripture. Reference to subsequent events and later names would not carry the same weight. These would not be so familiar to the people, and would not carry with them the authority of Divine teaching which already belonged to the 'Law.'

X. 1—29. The List of 'those that sealed': 30—39 Special Obligations of the Covenant.

1. *those that sealed*] Literally 'at the sealings,' the plur. of the word used in ix. 38. As in Jer. xxxii. 14, the singular and plural are used apparently of the same documents.

Some commentators are inclined to follow the LXX. ἐπὶ τῶν σφραγιζόντων, as if the words could be rendered 'among those that sealed or subscribed:' so apparently the Vulg. 'signatores.' But the Hebrew

3,4 miah, Pashur, Amariah, Malchijah, Hattush, Shebaniah,
5,6 Malluch, Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah, Daniel, Ginnethon,

word does not mean the man who affixes his seal, but the thing or document to which it is affixed. Others explain the plur. as indicating the numerous 'lists' prepared for signature, as if the different obligations would require different lists. This explanation cannot be pressed. It is sufficient to bear in mind that 'the sealings' were very probably 'parchments' or 'tablets,' and that several would be required for the signature of so large a number.

Nehemiah, the Tirshatha] Cf. vii. 65, viii. 9. Nehemiah's name comes first as that of the governor.

Hachaliah] R.V. **Hacaliah.**

Zidkijah] R.V. **Zedekiah.** Who this Zedekiah is who receives this honourable place next to the governor we are not told. As his name precedes the priests, we must suppose that he is either an official under the Persian rule ranking next to Nehemiah, or one of royal line (e.g. of the house of Zerubbabel).

The conjecture that he is the same as Zadok 'the scribe' in xiii. 13, and that, having drawn up the document of the Covenant, he therefore signed next after Nehemiah, rests partly on the assumption that 'Zadok' and 'Zedekiah' are interchangeable names, and partly on the fact that in Ezra iv. 8, 9, 17 a scribe's signature follows that of the chief officer. But the identification is not very probable.

3—8, Priests: 9—13, Levites: 14—28, Chiefs of the people.

The 21 names here given are those of the priestly houses. The list of xii. 1—3 agrees with it in 16 names. The number 21 is peculiar; in chap. xii. the number is larger by one. In Ezra ii., Neh. vii., only four priestly houses are recorded, viz. Jedaiah, Immer, Pashur and Harim, as having returned with Zerubbabel. Pashur is mentioned in ver. 3; Harim in ver. 5. The other priestly families had either developed themselves out of these first four, or had arrived from time to time from Babylon.

That 21 and not 24 are recorded, is noteworthy. Various conjectures have been hazarded, e.g. that names have dropped out from the text, or that three of the priestly tribes refused to sign the document, or that the complete list of priestly houses has not yet been reorganised.

Seraiah's name is given first. To his family belonged both Eliashib the high-priest and Ezra the scribe. The absence of their names does not therefore deserve the importance which some commentators have given to it. A single signature for the whole house may have been affixed by Eliashib or by Ezra or by some other distinguished person of the same house. We have no reason to look for the names of individual priests among the names of the priestly houses.

5. *Obadiah*] It has been suggested that Iddo's name has accidentally dropped out after Obadiah's. (Cf. xii. 4, 16.) If this were the case, the number of houses mentioned in this passage would agree with that in chap. xii.

Baruch, Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin, Maaziah, Bilgai, She- 7, 8
maiah: these *were* the priests. And the Levites: both 9
Jeshua the son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad,
Kadmiel; and their brethren, Shebaniah, Hodijah, Kelita, 10
Pelaiah, Hanan, Micha, Rehob, Hashabiah, Zaccur, Shere- 11, 12
biah, Shebaniah, Hodijah, Bani, Beninu. The chief of the 13, 14
people; Parosh, Pahath-moab, Elam, Zatthu, Bani, Bunni, 15

8. *these* were *the priests*] The names of Seraiah, Jeremiah, Amariah are found in both lists (*a*) xii. 1—7 and (*b*) xii. 12—22. Shebaniah is found in (*b*) xii. 14 but appears as Shechaniah in (*a*) xii. 3. Malluch is found in (*a*) xii. 2, but appears as Malluchi (Melicu) in (*b*) xii. 14: Harim is found in (*b*) xii. 15 but appears probably as Rehum in (*a*) xii. 3: Meremoth is found in (*a*) xii. 3, but appears as Meraioth in (*b*) xii. 15: Ginnetho is found in (*b*) xii. 16, but appears as Ginnethoi in (*a*) xii. 4: Mijamin is found in (*a*) xii. 5 but appears as Miniamin in (*b*) xii. 17. Bilgai is clearly the same as Bilgah (*a*) xii. 5 and (*b*) xii. 18. Hattush in found in (*a*) xii. 2 but has dropped out of (*b*). Azariah has sometimes been identified with the Ezra of (*a*) xii. 1 and (*b*) xii. 13.

It thus appears that, out of the 21 'priests' or 'priestly houses' mentioned here, nine (i.e. Pashur, Malchijah, Obadiah, Daniel, Baruch, Meshullam, Abijah, Maaziah, Shemaiah) do not occur in the two lists of chap. xii.

9—13. The Levites.

9. *both Jeshua*] R.V. **namely, Jeshua.** The 'copula' is used definitively as in ix. 16—22. But some of the best MSS. omit it altogether.

10. *Hodijah*] R.V. **Hodiah** and in ver. 13.

11. *Micha*] R.V. **Mica.**

There are 17 names of 'Levites' or 'Levitical houses': of these 17, we find four, i.e. Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel and Sherebiah, mentioned in xii. 8 among 'those that went up with Zerubbabel'; and seven (i.e. Jeshua, Bani, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Kelita, Hanan and Pelaiah) in viii. 7; and eight (i.e. Jeshua, Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Sherebiah, Chenani = Hanan, Hashabneiah = Hashabiah, Hodiah) in ix. 4, 5. It is to be observed that (*a*) besides Binnui, we have also Bani and Beninu (see note on ix. 4); (*b*) the names Hodiah and Shebaniah occur twice in the present list; (*c*) only four names, i.e. Mica, Rehob, Zaccur and Beninu, fail to appear in the other lists, and of these Mica and Rehob do not occur elsewhere, while Beninu is possibly a wrong reading for Bani or Binnui, and Zaccur's name may be the same as 'the son of Asaph' (xii. 35) or 'the father of Hanan' (xiii. 13) or 'the son of Imri' (iii. 2); (*d*) as in the case of the priests, the names represent divisions or houses of the Levites, not individuals.

14. *The chief of the people*] R.V. **The chiefs of the people.** A comparison with Ezr. ii. Neh. vii. puts it beyond doubt that here again we have to do with the names of houses, not of individuals.

Zatthu] R.V. **Zattu.**

16, 17 Azgad, Bebai, Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin, Ater, Hizkijah,
18, 19 Azzur, Hodijah, Hashum, Bezai, Hariph, Anathoth, Ne
20, 21 bai, Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir, Meshezabeel, Zadok,
22, 23 Jaddua, Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah, Hoshea, Hananiah,
24, 25 Hashub, Hallohesh, Pileha, Shobek, Rehum, Hashabnah,
26, 27 Maaseiah, and Ahijah, Hanan, Anan, Malluch, Harim,
Baanah.

28 And the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the

17. *Hizkijah*] R.V. **Hezekiah.**
18. *Hodijah*] R.V. **Hodiah.**
19. *Nebai*] R.V. **Nobai.** Marg. 'Another reading is *Nebai*'.
21. *Meshezabeel*] R.V. **Meshezabel.**
23. *Hashub*] R.V. **Hasshub.**
24. *Pileha*] R.V. **Pilha.**
26. *Ahijah*] R.V. **Ahiah.**

We have here 44 names: or, if Bunni (ver. 15) be the accidental repetition of Bani, and if 'Ater, Hezekiah' stand for 'Ater, of Hezekiah' (Ezr. ii. 16, vii. 21), no more than 42. This figure is considerably in excess of the number of names under the same head in Ezr. ii. Neh. vii.

(*a*) 14 names at least (i.e. Parosh, Pahath-moab, Elam, Zattu, Bani, Azgad, Bebai, Bigvai, Adin, Ater, Hariph (=Jorah Ezr. ii.), Hashum, Bezai, Anathoth) are found, as they occur here, in the lists of Ezr. ii. and Neh. vii.

Adonijah (ver. 16) is doubtless the same as Adonikam (Ezr. ii. 13, Neh. vii. 18), Magpiash (ver. 20), as Magbish (Ezr. ii. 30).

(*b*) The names of certain houses mentioned in the lists of Ezr. ii. and Neh. vii. e.g. Shephatiah, Arah, Zaccai do not appear here; these houses had either died out, or left the city, or refused to sign.

(*c*) The addition of names may be explained by the gradual accession of families since the age of Zerubbabel. But the variety of documents employed by the compiler is quite sufficient to account for considerable discrepancy in the names, since the work of compilation must have taken place long after the lists were drawn up.

28. *And the rest of the people*] This may be understood in two different ways: (*a*) according to some it denotes the mass of the laity, as distinguished from their princes and elders, like 'the people' (ver. 35), 'the residue of Israel' (xi. 20), and 'Israel' (1 Chron. ix. 2); (*b*) according to others under this head are included the various classes of the community mentioned in the present verse, but distinct from the representative names which have occupied the previous lists. It is not another group, but stands at the head of the verse in apposition to the groups to be mentioned. 'The priests' are the individual members of the great houses whose representatives had taken part 'in the sealing.' So also the subordinate religious orders, who are here divided into their classes of (*a*) Levites proper, (*b*) porters, (*c*) singers, (*d*) Nethinim. With the last name we should also probably associate 'the servants of Solomon,' vii. 57; Ezra ii. 43—54.

porters, the singers, the Nethinims, and all they that had separated themselves from the people of the lands unto the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, every one having knowledge, *and* having understanding; they clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into 29
a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes; and that we would not give 30
our daughters unto the people of the land, nor take their

Nethinims] R.V. Nethinim.

all they that had separated themselves] See note on Ezra vi. 21. By this class are probably intended Jews who had not gone into exile, but, having either in foreign lands or in Palestine been faithless to their religion, had since separated themselves from idolatry. Another explanation, which has some support from the words 'from the peoples of the lands,' understands by this expression 'proselytes who had attached themselves to the Jewish faith.'

from the people (R. V. peoples) *of the lands unto the law of God*] The antithesis is striking. Not 'from the peoples of the lands to the people of Israel,' but 'from the peoples of the land,' who were identified with abomination and filthiness (Ezra vi. 21), to 'the law of God,' which was the one standard of the claim to be a true Israelite.

having knowledge, and *having understanding*] R.V. **that had knowledge and understanding.** See note on viii. 2, 3; i.e. all of age and intelligence to know and understand the law. Vulg. 'omnes qui poterant sapere.'

their brethren, their nobles] i.e. the representatives of the great families who subscribed to the sealing of the Covenant. The people warmly supported them.

a curse...an oath] The 'curse' is the penalty which they invoked if they were faithless to the Covenant; the 'oath' is the solemn obligation of a duty which they vowed to perform.

For the phrase 'enter into an oath,' cf. Deut. xxix. 12 'that thou shouldest enter into the Covenant of the LORD thy God and into his oath.'

to walk in God's law, &c.] Compare the similar terms of the Covenant in Josiah's reign, 2 Kings xxiii. 3.

the LORD our Lord] i.e. Jahveh (=Jehovah) our Lord.

30. PROHIBITION OF INTERMARRIAGE WITH THE HEATHEN.

we] Observe the first person plural here introduced and maintained to ver. 39 throughout the rest of the Covenant details.

people] R.V. peoples.

This prohibition of intermarriage with the people of the land had been strenuously upheld by Ezra ix. 2. (See note.) The difficulty of

31 daughters for our sons: and *if* the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, *that* we would not buy *it* of them on the sabbath, or on the holy day: and *that* we would leave the seventh year, and the

enforcing it appears from Neh. xiii. 23—28. The words of the prohibition seem to be based on Deut. vii. 3 'Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.' Cf. Ex. xxxiv. 16; Jos. xxiii. 12; Jud. iii. 6.

It is to be noticed that the so-called Priestly Code gives no such prohibition unless it is implied in Gen. xxvi. 35; nor is it found in the central legislative portion of Deut. (xii.—xxvi.).

The Covenant introduces no new enactment, but affirms the Deuteronomic teaching which itself appears to be an expansion of the oldest law in Ex. xxiii. 32, 33, 'Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me.'

31. Prohibition of Traffic on the Sabbath; and Observance of Sabbatic Year.

people] R.V. peoples. 'The peoples of the land (*'ammey haâreç*) are the heathen dwellers in the land. The title 'the people of the land' ('am haâreç) was used in later days of the unlearned multitude 'which knoweth not the law' (John vii. 49).

ware] The Hebrew word occurs only here in the O. T. (LXX. ἀγορασμούς, Vulg. 'venalia').

on the sabbath day] The prohibition is not found in so many words in the Pentateuch. But it represents the natural expansion of the command to keep the Sabbath holy. Pollution would most easily be contracted by the interchange of wares with the heathen.

Complete abstention from such occupation was the only safeguard for the purity of the people, as well as for the observance of the Sabbath as a day of rest, cf. xiii. 15. This abstention was practised in the kingly period in respect of the sabbath and the new-moon days. Amos viii. 5, 'When will the new moon be gone that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?'

on the holy day] R.V. on a holy day. The days set apart to be observed as 'holy-days' are described in Num. xxviii., xxxi.

That these were to be observed as 'days of rest,' and were thus on the same footing with the Sabbath-days argues the acquaintance of the writer with the Levitical Law of the Priestly Code.

leave] R.V. forgo. The same word that is used in Ex. xxiii. 11 for 'let lie fallow.' LXX. ἀνήσομεν.

the seventh year] See Ex. xxiii. 10, 11, 'And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the increase thereof; but the seventh year thou shalt let it rest (marg. 'release it') and lie fallow.' This observance of the Sabbatic year is not referred to in the Deuteronomic Law which only speaks of it as the year of release from debt (Deut. xv.).

exaction of every debt. Also we made ordinances for us, 32
to charge ourselves yearly with the third *part* of a shekel

But the Priestly Law in Lev. xxv. 2—7 enters with some minuteness into the agricultural 'rest' of the seventh year. This regulation was not, for practical reasons, scrupulously carried out; its neglect is the subject of rebuke, Lev. xxvi. 34, 35, 43; 2 Chron. xxxvi. 21. It seems to have been observed in later times, cf. 1 Macc. vi. 49, 53; Jos. *Ant.* xi. 8. 6, xiii. 8. 1, &c. Tacitus, who is prejudiced against the Jews, attributes the custom to national laziness, *Hist.* v. 4.

and the exaction of every debt] This is a technical expression taken from Deut. xv. 2, and constitutes the expansion, for the requirements of a more developed time, of the principle laid down in the agricultural Law of the Sabbatic Year (Ex. xxiii.). By a common error it has been supposed that debts were on this year altogether remitted. The analogy of the 'fallow' land shows that the debts remained, but were not exacted; payment was 'hung up' for a whole year. Some render 'the exaction of every man's pledge.' The versions are literal, LXX. ἀπαίτησιν πάσης χειρός. Vulg. 'exactionem universae manus.' The remission of 'the exaction of debt' on the seventh or Sabbatic year is found in the Deuteronomic, but not in the Levitical Laws. The covenant to which the Israelites were now subscribing did not rest on a Levitical code alone, but recognised the authority of other portions of the Pentateuch.

This is one indication among others that the Law, which Ezra administered, contained substantially all the component parts of our Pentateuch, though not necessarily every item, as we now have it, in each component part.

32. A POLL-TAX OF ⅓ OF A SHEKEL IMPOSED FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF THE SERVICE OF THE TEMPLE.

32. *we made ordinances for us*] The verse shows that Ezra and his colleagues, although establishing the authority of the written law, were ready to expand or modify it according to the requirements of the time—a significant indication of the way in which the numerous instances of minor variation in the laws of the Pentateuch may reflect changes and qualifications required at different epochs. 'Ordinances.' The plural shows that the reference is not to be limited to the Temple tax.

the third part *of a shekel*] See Ex. xxx. 11—16; in which passage every Israelite, 'from twenty years old and upward,' is required to give 'the offering of the LORD,' i.e. '*half-a-shekel* after the shekel of the sanctuary:' 'the rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less than the half shekel, when they give the offering of the LORD, to make atonement for your souls.' The sum of 'half a shekel,' or two drachmæ, is mentioned as the regulation tax in Matt. xvii. 24, 'Doth not your master pay the half-shekel?' (*didrachma*). Cf. Josephus *B. J.* vii. 6. 6, 'The emperor commanded every Jew to pay the two drachmæ annually to the Capitol which they had before been accustomed to pay to the Temple at Jerusalem.'

33 for the service of the house of our God; for the shewbread, and *for* the continual meat offering, and for the continual

A poll-tax of $\frac{1}{3}$ shekel for the services of the Temple differs both from the regulation of Exodus xxx. and from the later Jewish custom. In Ex. xxx. 11—16 a tribute of $\frac{1}{2}$ shekel is to be levied, not annually, but on the occasions when the census of the people was taken. From Josephus we learn that the contribution of $\frac{1}{2}$ shekel was annually levied from every Jew. Here the Jews charge themselves with an annual tribute of $\frac{1}{3}$ shekel.

In order to explain this apparent discrepancy, some scholars maintain that the tax mentioned in Exodus, being only occasional, has no connexion with the annual poll-tax, and that the $\frac{1}{3}$ shekel was in later days raised to $\frac{1}{2}$ shekel when the Jews were wealthier, in order to assimilate the annual tax to the sum of the occasional ransom tax mentioned in the Pentateuch. It is an objection to this view that (1) there is no reference here to the occasional tax, (2) we have no mention anywhere of the coexistence of two taxes, one occasional and the other annual, for the maintenance of the Temple, (3) the reference in 2 Chron. xxiv. 5—9 to the Mosaic law seems to contemplate a regular and not an occasional tax.

Others have conjectured that the requirement of the $\frac{1}{2}$ shekel in Exodus xxx. is an interpolation later than the time of Nehemiah, made in the interest of the priests. To this it may be replied that, if such an interpolation had been made, it would surely also have been directed towards securing an annual tribute, instead of a payment to be made only at the time when the people were numbered.

It is more probable that the discrepancies reflect the gradual growth of the custom. The law in Ex. xxx. 11—16 goes back to the days when to number the people was associated with human presumption, for which expiation was to be made. Cf. 2 Sam. xxiv. The necessities of the Temple service caused this occasional tax to become a regular one under kings favourable to the priests (2 Chr. xxiv.). After the Return the poverty of the Jews made it difficult to maintain the Temple services. The regular contributions promised by the Persian king (Ezr. vii. 2—23) ceased, or were only for a short period. The imposition of an annual poll-tax of $\frac{1}{3}$ shekel would be cheerfully accepted at the time of religious reformation under Ezra. In later times, when the power of the High-priest became more absolute and the prosperity of the Jews grew, the tax was raised from $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ shekel, in imitation of the occasional 'census' tax which had become obsolete, but whose memorial existed in Ex. xxx.[1]

[1] An interesting explanation has recently been suggested: "In Exodus each male Israelite contributed a *bekah*, or half a shekel (of the Sanctuary) to defray the cost of the Tabernacle: this half-shekel was a drachm of about 65 grs. Troy....The Babylonian silver stater of [the age of Nehemiah] weighed about 172·8 grs. This formed the standard of the Empire, and doubtless the Jews of the Captivity employed it like the rest of the subjects of the Great King. The third part of this stater or shekel weighed about 58 grains; so that practically the third part of the Babylonian silver shekel was the same as the half of the ancient light shekel, or shekel of the Sanctuary." (Ridgeway's *Origin of Currency and Weight Measures*, p. 281.)

burnt offering, of the sabbaths, of the new moons, for the set feasts, and for the holy *things*, and for the sin offerings to make an atonement for Israel, and *for* all the work of

33. This verse gives in detail 'the service of the house of God.' (ver. 31).

the shewbread] See Ex. xxv. 23—30, xxxvii. 10—16; Lev. xxiv. 5—9. The shewbread consisted of 12 unleavened cakes of fine meal, which were laid fresh every Sabbath in two rows of six upon the table in the Holy Place. Their preparation fell to the duty of the Kohathite Levites (1 Chron. ix. 32). The antiquity of this rite is shown by the story of David. 1 Sam. xxi. 2—7. The name by which 'the shewbread' is here designated is 'bread of arrangement,' 'lekhem hammaareketh' (Vulg. 'panes propositionis). The LXX. renders εἰς ἄρτους τοῦ προσώπου, 'bread of the face,' which is the translation of the other Hebrew name by which it was known, 'lekhem happānîm:' we should have expected εἰς ἄρτους προθέσεως.

for *the continual meat* (R.V. **meal**) *offering, and for the continual burnt offering*] We have mention of 'the continual meal offering' or '*minkhah*,' which was offered every evening, in 1 Kings xviii. 29, 36; 2 Kings xvi. 15; Ezr. ix. 4; Dan. ix. 21. In 2 Kings xvi. 15 we find 'the morning burnt offering (*olah*),' as well as 'the evening meal offering,' spoken of. Now in the Priestly Laws (Ex. xxix. 38—42; Num. xxviii. 3—8) we find the regulations for a burnt offering, with a meal offering, morning and evening. This is what is probably intended in the present passage, in Ezra iii. 3, 5, and in the Books of Chronicles, e.g. 2 Chron. xxxi. 3. We need not expect to find so full a ritual in practice before, as there was after, the influence of Ezra's work made itself felt: nor can we hope to find in the historical narrative full illustration of all the details of worship required by the ideal of the Priestly Law.

Sacrifices were 'continual' (*tamidh*) in the sense of being regular and at stated times, as distinct from occasional, voluntary, and irregular offerings. Thus the 'shew-bread' is 'continual bread,' '*lekhem hattamidh*' (Num. iv. 7).

of the sabbaths, of the new moons] i.e. for the 'continual offering' of the sabbath and of the new moon, and for the special offerings required for those days, as recorded in Num. xxviii. 9—10 (Sabbath), 11—15 (new moon), from which the rule in Ezek. xlvi. 4, 6 differs considerably.

for the set feasts] A description of these 'days of holy convocation' is found in Num. xxviii. 16—xxix. 38.

for the holy things] Such, for instance, as 'the thankofferings' of the community. Cf. 2 Chron. xxix. 33, 'And the consecrated things were six hundred oxen and three thousand sheep,' xxxv. 13, 'the holy offerings.'

the sin offerings] i.e. Those offered for the community, (*a*) regularly, along with the burnt offerings, Num. xxviii. xxix., (*b*) on exceptional occasions of national transgression, Lev. iv. 13.

for *all the work*, &c.] The preposition 'for' is carried on from the beginning of the verse. This general expression 'all the work' com-

34 the house of our God. And we cast the lots *among* the priests, the Levites, and the people, for the wood offering, to bring *it* into the house of our God, after the houses of our fathers, at times appointed year by year, to burn upon the altar of the LORD our God, as it is written in the law:

pletes the list of objects upon which the ⅓ shekel tax was expended. LXX. εἰς ἔργα. Vulg. 'in omnem usum.'

34. *And we cast the lots*] R.V. **And we cast lots.** The use of the article in the Heb. does not here call attention to the use of any peculiarly sacred 'lots,' but generally to the means employed for ascertaining the Divine will. For decision by the casting of lots, cf. the choosing of the goat on the day of Atonement (Lev. xvi. 8—10), the distribution of the Promised Land (Jos. xiv. 2, xviii. 10), the selection of the first king (1 Sam. x. 19), the distribution of offices among the 24 priestly houses (1 Chron. xxiv. 5, xxv. 8, xxvi. 13), and of the priestly duties among the individual members (Luke i. 9). Here the lot was to decide the succession of the houses, which took it in turn to supply the wood for the sacrifices of the Temple.

for the wood offering] Cf. xiii. 31. The supply of wood for the enormous number of sacrifices offered at the Temple of Jerusalem must have represented a large annual sum. The difficulty of procuring wood must have been very great: (1) the area of territory occupied by the Jewish community was small, (2) the trees in the neighbourhood must have suffered during the Chaldean invasion and siege.

after the houses of our fathers] R.V. **according to our fathers' houses.** Another translation, 'even into the house of our fathers,' i.e. 'into the Temple' would certainly be possible according to the Hebrew, but is not to be accepted, as its use occurs nowhere else, and after the mention of 'the house of our God' there would be no special appropriateness for the employment of another name.

at times appointed] Cf. xiii. 31; Ezr. x. 14. According to the Talmud on *nine* days in the year.

as it is written in the law] There is no statute in the Levitical code regulating the supply of firewood for the sacrifices. The only reference to the wood of the offering in 'the Law' is contained in Lev. vi. 12, 13, 'And the fire upon the altar shall be kept burning thereon, it shall not go out; and the priest shall burn wood on it every morning; and he shall lay the burnt offering in order upon it, and shall burn thereon the fat of the peace offerings. Fire shall be kept burning upon the altar continually; it shall not go out.' If the words 'as it is written in the law' contain a reference to a passage in the Pentateuch, it must be looked for in connexion with 'the burning on the altar' (e.g. Lev. vi. 12, 13), not with 'the wood-offering.' Against this it may fairly be urged that 'the wood offering,' being the principal subject of the verse, is also the most probable subject for this quotation from Scripture. But if 'as it is written in the law' alludes to 'the wood offering,' 'the law' must be understood in a general sense of the traditional regulations of the priests, which apparently were not all embodied in

and to bring the firstfruits of our ground, and the firstfruits 35
of all fruit of all trees, year by year, unto the house of the
LORD: also the firstborn of our sons, and of our cattle, 36
as it is written in the law, and the firstlings of our herds
and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God, unto
the priests that minister in the house of our God: and 37
that we should bring the firstfruits of our dough, and our

our Pentateuch. New circumstances necessitated new regulations; and we have to suppose that among the new written regulations of the priests was one relating to 'the wood offering.' We may conjecture that after the return from the exile the scarcity and expensiveness of fuel for the sacrifices made it necessary to draw up special regulations by which 'the houses' took it in turn to supply the wood. The burden was thus distributed over the community. The new regulation had been committed to writing; but, as appears from our Pentateuch, it was never incorporated in the canonical 'Thora,' perhaps from the reason that its history was known to be recent. Josephus (*Bell. Jud.* ii. 17. 6) mentions that on the 14th day of the 5th month Loos (Ab) was the Festival of Wood-bringing (Ξυλοφόρια), at which every Jew used to bring wood for the altar of burnt offering, that there never might be wanting a supply of fuel for the sacred fire.

35—39. FIRST-FRUITS AND TITHE.

35. *the firstfruits of our ground*] Cf. Ex. xxiii. 19, xxxiv. 26. 'The first of the firstfruits of the ground thou shalt bring into the house of the LORD thy God;' so also in greater detail Deut. xxvi. 2—10. Cf. Prov. iii. 9; Ezek. xliv. 30.

of all trees] R.V. **of all manner of trees.** See Num. xviii. 12, 13, 'all the best of the oil and all the best of the vintage, and of the corn, the firstfruits of them which they give unto the LORD, to thee have I given them. The first ripe fruits of all that is in their land, which they bring unto the LORD shall be thine,' cf. 2 Chron. xxxi. 5. Lev. xix. 23.

36. *the firstborn of our sons*] The firstborn of the children of Israel 'from a month old' were redeemed 'for the money of five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary.' Num. xviii. 16; cf. Ex. xiii. 13, xxxiv. 20.

of our cattle, as it is written in the law] The firstlings of oxen, sheep and goats were not redeemed; they were holy; their fat was offered as a burnt offering; the flesh was the portion of the priests. See Num. xviii. 17—19. But the firstborn of all unclean beasts were redeemed for a price. Cf. Ex. xxiii. 19; Num. xviii. 15.

herds.. flocks] i.e. the goats and sheep mentioned in Num. xviii. 17.

37. *and* that *we should bring*] The change of construction (cf. the infinitive 'to bring' in *vv.* 35, 36) somewhat favours the suggestion that this and the next two verses are a later insertion, introduced for the purpose of recording in detail the Jewish practice of paying firstfruits and tithes.

offerings, and the fruit of all *manner of* trees, of wine and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites *might* have the tithes in all the cities of

the firstfruits of our dough] R.V. marg. 'Or, *coarse meal*.' See Num. xv. 21, 'Of the first of your dough (marg. Or, *coarse meal*) ye shall offer up a cake for an heave offering.' The firstfruits or 'the first' (rêshith) is equivalent to 'the best.' Cf. Lev. xxiii. 17.

and our offerings] R.V. **and our heave offerings.** Before this expression we have also to understand 'the firstfruits of.' The priests did not receive the whole 'heave offerings' (*terumoth*), but 'the firstfruits' or 'first' of them. This is also the teaching of Ezek. xliv. 30, 'And the first of all the firstfruits of everything, and every oblation (marg. Or, *heave offering*) of everything, of all your oblations, shall be for the priests.' The portion thus assigned to the priests was called 'the heave offering for the priests' (Neh. xiii. 5). The word rendered 'heave offering' was used in a general sense to denote 'a gift' (Prov. xxix. 4), but was applied in a special sense to gifts or offerings for a sacred purpose, e.g. contributions to the tabernacle, Ex. xxv. 2 sq., or the portions of sacrifices set apart for the priests, Lev. vii. 32. In 2 Sam. i. 21, 'fields of offerings' are fields from whose rich pasture the firstlings of the flock would be taken.

and the fruit of all manner of *trees*] See on ver. 35. We should understand these words to depend upon 'the firstfruits of.' The structure of the verse is certainly in favour of this interpretation. 'The firstfruits,' devoted to the priests, are distinguished from the 'tithes' which are given to the Levites.

wine] R.V. marg. 'Or, *the vintage*.' 'The wine and the oil,' not in apposition to 'the fruit of all manner of trees,' but separately mentioned on account of their peculiar value. Cf. Num. xviii. 12.

to the chambers of the house of our God] See on ver. 39, xii. 44, xiii. 4; LXX. εἰς τὸ γαζοφυλάκιον οἴκου τοῦ θεοῦ.

the tithes of our ground] According to Lev. xxvii. 30. On the omission of reference to tithe of 'herd and flock' mentioned in Lev. xxvii. 32, see note at end of chapter. Passages in the O.T. dealing with tithe are Gen. xiv. 20, xxviii. 22; Lev. xxvii. 30—33; Num. xviii. 21—32; Deut. xiv. 22—29, xxvi. 12—15; Amos iv. 4; Mal. iii. 8—10; 2 Chron. xxxi. 5, 6, and Neh. x. 37—39, xii. 44, xiii. 5.

that the same Levites might *have the tithes*] R.V. **for they, the Levites, take the tithes.** LXX. δεκατοῦντες. Vulg. 'accipient decimas.' The word in the Hebrew which generally denotes 'to pay tithe of something,' is here used in a special sense of collecting tithe, in which it is found in the later Hebrew of the Mishnah. It occurs here in the sense of ἀποδεκατόω in Hebr. vii. 5 'to take tithes of the people.'

in all the cities of our tillage] LXX. ἐν πάσαις πόλεσιν δουλείας ἡμῶν. Vulg. 'ex omnibus civitatibus operum nostrorum.' Cf. 1 Chron. xxvii. 26, 'over them that did the work of the field for tillage of the ground.' The translation of '*abodah*' by 'tillage' gives the only probable sense.

our tillage. And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with 38
the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levites
shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our
God, to the chambers, into the treasure house. For the 39
children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the
offering of the corn, of the new wine, and the oil, unto the

The alternative, 'cities of our service' would be meaningless. The words are important as determining the agricultural character of the area from which this tithe was collected. It is implied, though not stated, that the tithe thus collected by the Levites was of 'the fruits of the field' (cf. Deut. xiv. 22—29, xxvi. 12—15) and did not include the tithe of 'the herd or the flock.' See note on ver. 39. The word '*Abodah*' was in later times technically used for 'worship.' Cf. the saying of Simon the Just in the *Pirqe Aboth*, 'On three things the world is stayed; on the Thorah, and on the Worship (*Abodah*), and on the bestowal of kindnesses' (*Sayings of the Jewish Fathers*, Taylor, p. 26).

38. *the priest the son of Aaron*] This is not the high-priest; but in every 'city of their tillage' one of priestly descent was to superintend the paying in of the tithe which had been collected by the Levites, so that the interests of the priesthood should not suffer.

the tithe of the tithes] This was paid by the Levites to the priests, according to Num. xviii. 25—28. The law of 'tithe' in Deut. xiv. 22—29, xxvi. 12—15 differs very widely from that in Numbers, except in the point that it was to be derived from the produce of the soil. The characteristic features of the Deuteronomic law of tithe are (1) the annual social feast (xiv. 22—26), (2) charity to the Levite (xiv. 27), and (3) a special tithing every third year on behalf of the Levite (xiv. 28, xxvi. 12—15). But of these regulations we find no trace in the present passage.

to the chambers, into the treasure house] i.e. those chambers which were set apart as a treasure house for contributions paid in kind. Cf. xiii. 5. Other chambers were employed for other purposes. The LXX. for 'into the treasure house' has εἰς οἶκον τοῦ θεοῦ by an accidental repetition.

39. *For*] Explaining the mention of 'the chambers' as the receptacles of all these offerings.

the children of Israel] i.e. the laity as distinguished from the priests and the Levites.

the offering] R.V. **heave offering.** This 'heave offering' includes both 'the firstfruits' of the children of Israel (*vv.* 36, 37) and 'the tithe of the tithe' paid by the Levite to the priests (37). It is the special designation of the tithe paid both by Israel and by the house of Levi in Num. xviii. 24—28.

the new wine] R.V. **the wine.** Marg. 'Or, *the vintage.*' The word in the Hebrew is the same as that used in ver. 37.

and the oil] R.V. **and of the oil.**

On 'the chambers' see especially xiii. 4—12.

chambers, where *are* the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that minister, and the porters, and the singers: and we will not forsake the house of our God.

the vessels of the sanctuary] In xiii. 9 it is again mentioned that 'the vessels of the sanctuary' were stored in these chambers. What they were, we are not told; but that they comprised instruments for sacrifice, vessels for libations and lustrations, and plate for sacred feasts, would appear from the short inventory in Ezr. i. 9, 10.

priests...porters...singers] i.e. the Aaronic house and those of the Levites whose work was especially connected with the maintenance of the Temple and the Temple worship. From this combination we might conclude (1) that the Levitical community, with the exception of the 'porters' and 'singers,' were for the most part in Nehemiah's time not resident at Jerusalem, but quartered in the country districts, cf. xi. 20, xii. 27; (2) that the porters and singers participated with the priests in the offerings of the people.

we will not forsake] The object of the new regulations is to maintain the efficiency of the Temple worship and to provide for the welfare of those that ministered in it; 'we will not forsake' is equivalent to 'we will not neglect or diminish the contributions to the Temple, which we have publicly undertaken.'

NOTE ON 'THE TITHE.' It must be noticed that 'the tithe' spoken of in this context is described as 'tithes of our ground,' 'tithes in all the cities of our tillage,' and is probably here (ver. 39) represented along with 'the heave offering,' as consisting of corn, wine and oil, as indeed it is spoken of in xiii. 5, 12. In other words 'the tithe' is a vegetable one; and this is also the impression which we gather from the description of 'tithe' in Num. xviii. and Mal. iii. 8—11.

Now in Lev. xxvii. 32, 33 'a tithe of the herd or the flock' is called 'holy to the LORD,' and with this agrees the mention of 'the tithe of oxen and sheep' in 2 Chron. xxxi. 6. It is needless to point out what an enormous addition this 'tithe of the herd or the flock' would make to the wealth of the Priesthood and the treasury of the Temple. How then does it come to pass that neither in the regulations contained in Num. xviii. and Deut. xiv., nor in Neh. x., xii., xiii. is any allusion made to the tithe of herd and flock? Two explanations are forthcoming:

(1) It is possible that Lev. xxvii. 32 embodies a primitive pastoral law of tithing, which having fallen into desuetude was omitted at the time of the codification of the laws in Num. xviii. and Deut. xiv. In support of this view it should be remembered that Jacob's vow to dedicate a tenth (Gen. xxviii. 22) certainly referred to the tithe of property in herds and flocks, while the possibility of exacting a 'tenth' of the flocks even for civil purposes is contemplated in 1 Sam. viii. 17. According to this view, Hezekiah would have revived a religious custom, which was inherited from the time when the nation was more pastoral than agricultural. It is natural to suppose that the Jewish community at Jerusalem in Nehemiah's days was too poor to maintain this additional burden. The objection to this explanation is that the appearance

And the rulers of the people dwelt at Jerusalem: the rest **11**
of the people also cast lots, to bring one of ten to dwell in

of Lev. xxvii. 32 in relation to its immediate context is not that of a survival from an earlier legislation; while the children of Israel could never have so far abandoned the pastoral in favour of agricultural life as to make it worth while to surrender the claim to so important a source of revenue for the service of the Temple.

(2) It is possible, as is maintained in some quarters, that 'the animal tithe-law' of Lev. xxvii. 32 may be an interpolation later than Nehemiah's time, made in the interest of the Priesthood. There is more to be said for this startling supposition than might perhaps be expected. A close inspection of Lev. xxvii. 30—33 shows that ver. 32 is strangely and abruptly introduced between ver. 31 and ver. 33, which deal with the subject of the redemption of the vegetable-tithe mentioned in ver. 30. Again, in 2 Chron. xxxi. we find that, after the mention in ver. 5 of 'tithe of all things' being given by 'the children of Israel', another sentence (ver. 6) tells us that 'the children of Israel and Judah that dwelt in the cities of Judah, they also brought in the tithe of oxen and sheep and the tithe of consecrated things, &c.' which is not improbably a later expansion of the previous words. It is obviously an objection to this view that the insertion of a clause making so large a claim upon the property of the Jews could rarely at any time have been secretly foisted into the text of the Pentateuch; and that, supposing it to have been possible, such an interpolation made in the interest of the Priestly families would have had the smallest chance of success at a time when the Scribes controlled the transcription of the text.

The solution of the problem has not yet been reached. The difficulty illustrates the variations in Israelite law, in which are reflected the altered circumstances of different centuries. It must be admitted that Lev. xxvii. 32 wears an appearance not altogether free from suspicion; and an interpolation in an age, when, as we know from the LXX. version, the text of the Pentateuch was not yet fully settled, is not outside the range of probability.

Part III. MISCELLANEOUS.

Ch. xi. 1—xii. 26.	Lists.
xii. 27—43.	Dedication of the City Walls.
44—47.	Levitical Organization.
xiii. 1—3.	Relations with Heathen.

XI. 1—XII. 26. Extracts from Registers and Public Lists.

1, 2. Measures taken to increase the number of dwellers in Jerusalem.

This passage seems to take up the thread which had been dropped at vii. 4. Nehemiah had been rendered anxious by the fewness of the inhabitants in proportion to the size of the area of the city. The census which he undertook reminded him of the old register which had come to his notice (vii. 6—73); the memoirs of Nehemiah were then inter-

Jerusalem the holy city, and nine parts *to dwell* in *other*
2 cities. And the people blessed all the men, that willingly

rupted by a description of the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Solemn Covenant (viii.—x). The Compiler returning to the subject of the paucity of dwellers in Jerusalem, briefly describes the method adopted of increasing their number, probably epitomizing the account which Nehemiah's own Memoirs contained.

1. *And*] The copula has no connexion with the preceding chapter, and probably marks the compilatory character of the passage.

rulers] R.V. **princes.**

dwelt at (R.V. **in**) *Jerusalem*] It has been suggested that this clause refers only to 'the princes,' who, before Nehemiah took the matter in hand, had resided in the country: in deference to his wishes or yielding to his entreaties these princes now dwelt in Jerusalem. But the difficulty remained how to secure the presence in greater numbers of those who, from lack of means or by reason of trade and occupation, could not so easily change their quarters. This explanation which treats the word 'dwelt' as equivalent to 'came to dwell,' derives considerable support from the word 'also' in the following clause.

Others find the explanation of the verse in the contrast between 'the princes of the people' and 'the rest of the people.' The former naturally had dwellings in Jerusalem; they lived there because concerned in the government of the community and able to afford a dwelling in the city. The latter, however, for the most part the middle and lower classes, lived in the country; and they, being no less eager than their superiors in rank for the defence of the Holy City, determined to recruit its numbers by a contingent of ten per cent.

cast lots] Cf. on x. 34.

the holy city] Jerusalem is so-called also in *v.* 18. The occurrence of this title in Scripture may be illustrated by Isai. xlviii. 2, 'For they call themselves of the holy city,' lii. 1, 'O Jerusalem, the holy city,' cf. Dan. ix. 24; Joel iii. 17. In the N.T. it occurs in Matt. iv. 5, xxvii. 53; cf. Rev. xi. 2, xxi. 2, 10, xxii. 19.

nine parts to dwell *in* other *cities*] R.V. **nine parts in the** other **cities.**

'In the cities,' as the Hebrew has it, must denote the towns and villages of the country occupied by the Jewish community; cf. *v.* 20.

2. *that willingly offered themselves*] Another group is here distinguished, i.e. those who volunteered to go and dwell in Jerusalem. They are not to be confused with those who were sent there, being chosen 'by lot.' They went of their own accord, moved by public spirit. The blessing of their countrymen shows the enthusiasm aroused by their patriotic action; at the same time, it may denote that residence in Jerusalem was recognised to be fraught with danger. To dwell in the 'holy city' was also to defend it from its many enemies, see chap. vii. 4. It is not stated that they were accepted as substitutes for those chosen by lot.

According to this explanation we are told in these two verses of three classes of dwellers in Jerusalem: (*a*) the princes, (*b*) ten per cent,

offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem. Now these *are* 3
the chief of the province that dwelt in Jerusalem: but in
the cities of Judah dwelt every one in his possession in

of the inhabitants of the other towns selected by lot and forcibly transferred, and (*c*) those who voluntarily migrated to the capital.

3—10. From this verse to xii. 26 we have a succession of lists: (1) the chiefs of the provinces that dwelt in Jerusalem, 4—26; (2) the towns and villages occupied by the Jews, 25—36; (3) the priests and Levites that went up with Zerubbabel from Babylon, xii. 1—9; (4) the genealogy of the high-priests beginning at Jeshua, xii. 10—11; (5) the heads of the priestly houses in the days of Joiakim, xii. 12—21; (6) of the Levitical houses at the same period, xii. 22—26.

The origin of the lists is not recorded. That some of them may have been included in the 'Memoirs' of Nehemiah is very possible. But all doubtless bear traces of the Compiler's work either by abridgement or by necessary adaptation from official records.

The first of the lists presents a close resemblance to a list contained in the Book of Chronicles: compare Neh. xi. 3—19 with 1 Chron. ix. 2—17. The two lists are clearly the same although they differ in certain details. The best way of accounting for the presence of this duplicate list is to suppose that both were copied from the same official document, but by different hands and for different purposes. The Compiler found both copies extant, the one in connexion with the genealogies of the tribes (1 Chron. ix.), the other either embodied in, or preserved along with, the official documents of Nehemiah's government.

3. *Now these* are *the chief*, &c.] The heading of our list differs from that in 1 Chron. ix. 2, which runs, 'Now the first inhabitants that dwelt in their possessions in their cities were, Israel, the priests, the Levites, and the Nethinim.' The purpose of the list in 1 Chron. ix. is apparently to give the names of the families who had either remained in Judea at the time when the mass of the people were transported to Babylon, or had returned to their own country either from exile or from voluntary flight in Egypt and the neighbouring nations. The purpose of the list in our passage is apparently to state the number of the inhabitants either before or after (Rawlinson) the measures taken to augment them in Nehemiah's time.

The mention of 'the king' in ver. 23 and ver. 24 is apparently a reference to Artaxerxes; a conclusive proof that the list belongs to the age of Nehemiah.

According to some commentators, the list is intended to give the names of 'the princes of the people' mentioned in ver. 1. But the expression 'the chiefs of the province' (see on Ezra ii. 1) suggests that the list and its superscription have no original connexion with verses 1 and 2. It is more probable that the Compiler having access to this list belonging to the age of Nehemiah, in which the classification is that of 'the dwellers in Jerusalem' (4—19) and 'the residue of Israel' (20—36) has inserted it here in terms as nearly as possible corresponding to the division of the people in ver. 1.

their cities, *to wit*, Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants.
4 And at Jerusalem dwelt *certain* of the children of Judah, and of the children of Benjamin. Of the children of Judah; Athaiah the son of Uzziah, the son of Zechariah, the son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalaleel, of
5 the children of Perez; and Maaseiah the son of Baruch, the son of Col-hozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiah, the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, the son of Shiloni.
6 All the sons of Perez that dwelt at Jerusalem *were* four
7 hundred threescore and eight valiant men. And these *are*

Nethinims] R.V. **Nethinim.**

and the children of Solomon's servants] See on Ezra ii. 58; Neh. vii. 57. These are not mentioned in the parallel passage, 1 Chron. ix. 2.

4. *And at Jerusalem*] R.V. **And in Jerusalem.** In the Chronicles list after 'the children of Benjamin' are mentioned 'and of the children of Ephraim and Manasseh.'

Athaiah the son of Uzziah, &c.] In 1 Chron. ix. 4 the house of Perez is represented by 'Uthai the son of Ammihud.' The suggestion that 'Athaiah' and 'Uthai' are identical appears plausible at first sight. But the names of their respective ancestors are different; and it is possible that two different men are intended. If the great similarity of the names forbids us to believe that two separate personages can be referred to, we must conclude that the two lists are epitomes and have preserved different representative names from the completer genealogy in the original document.

Mahalaleel] R.V. **Mahalalel.**

Perez] or Pharez. Cf. Gen. xxxviii. 29; 1 Chron. iv. 1.

5. *Maaseiah*] In 1 Chron. ix. 5, 'And of the Shilonites; Asaiah the firstborn, and his sons.'

the son of Shiloni] R.V. **the son of the Shilonite.** The word for 'son of' (*ben*) has probably been inserted by copyists who mistook the patronymic 'Shilonite' for a proper name. The word 'Shilonite' has nothing to do with the town Shiloh; but is the patronymic form denoting a descendant of Shelah, son of Judah (Num. xxvi. 20). The Chronicles list mentions also the name of Jeuel, son of Zerah, Judah's third son; but in this passage the Zerahites have disappeared. Their line may have become extinct, or been merged in one of the brother's houses; or is it omitted here, because 'the children of Zerah, the son of Judah' are represented in ver. 24 by Pethahiah?

Col-hozeh] This name has occurred in chap. iii. 15.

6. *at Jerusalem*] R.V. **in.**

four hundred threescore and eight valiant men] Our list gives the number of the sons of Perez, 468; the Chronicles list gives the number of the sons of Zerah, 690. It is clear, therefore, that neither list is complete, but that each is drawn from some fuller document.

the sons of Benjamin; Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son of Pedaiah, the son of Kolaiah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ithiel, the son of Jesaiah. And 8 after him Gabbai, Sallai, nine hundred twenty and eight. And Joel the son of Zichri *was* their overseer: and Judah 9 the son of Senuah *was* second over the city.

valiant men] i.e. men capable of bearing arms, able-bodied men.

7. *Sallu the son of Meshullam*] This name stands at the head of the Benjamites in 1 Chron. ix. 7—9. But otherwise the lists here vary from one another.

8. *Gabbai, Sallai*] The occurrence of these names, not separated by the copula, is peculiar. No connexion can be traced between the 'Gabbai, Sallai,...Joel,...Judah,' of our list with the 'Ibneiah, Elah and Meshullam' in 1 Chron. ix. 8. But there are certain peculiarities in the two lists at this point which make us suspect that the text of the original document was here at fault. Thus in our text we may remark on (1) the abruptness of 'after him Gabbai, Sallai,' (2) the number 928 differing from, but yet sufficiently close to, that of 956 in 1 Chron. Sallai, it has been conjectured, is the name Sallu repeated, which has crept into the text from a gloss on the word 'after him.' In 1 Chronicles we remark upon Meshullam occurring twice, and Ibneiah by the side of Ibnijah. The number 928, if we may argue from the analogy of ver. 6, relates only to the house of Sallai or Gabbai Sallai. In 1 Chron. ix. 9, the number 956 represents the sons of Benjamin.

9. *And Joel*, &c.] There is nothing in the 1 Chron. list corresponding with this verse.

overseer] Apparently the members of the same tribe or house formed a distinct organization within the city walls, and were under a responsible head or 'overseer,' 'pâqid.' LXX. ἐπίσκοπος. Vulg. 'praepositus.'

Judah the son of Senuah (R.V. **Hassenuah**)] In 1 Chron. ix. 7 Sallu is spoken of as a descendant of 'Hodaviah the son of Hassenuah.' Remembering the confusion between 'Judah' and 'Hodaviah' in Ezra ii. 40 and iii. 9, it is possible that we have here another trace of textual corruption. 'Elah...the son of Michri' is also confused with 'Joel the son of Zichri,' 1 Chron. ix. 8.

second over the city] From the context it is evident that the expression refers only to the overseership over the Benjamites, or, at the most, the men of Judah and Benjamin in the city. He was 'deputy overseer,' or second in command to Joel. Cf. 'brethren of the second degree' 1 Chron. xv. 18, 'second to him' xvi. 5. It is not, however, quite certain that the traditional translation adopted in the English version is correct. In the opinion of some scholars the word rendered 'second' qualifies 'the city,' which in the Hebrew it immediately follows. It will not then denote the rank of Judah the son of Hassenuah, but the quarter of the capital over which he was overseer. Cf. 2 Kings xxii. 14, 'She (Huldah) dwelt in Jerusalem, in the second quarter.' 2 Chron.

10, 11 Of the priests: Jedaiah the son of Joiarib, Jachin, Seraiah
the son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok,
the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, *was* the ruler of the
12 house of God. And their brethren that did the work of the
house *were* eight hundred twenty and two: and Adaiah
the son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi,
the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashur, the son of Malchiah,

xxxiv. 22; Zeph. i. 10. On the division of Jerusalem into two districts, for purposes of administration, see Neh. iii. 9, 12. We know from Neh. vii. 2 that Nehemiah had constituted Hanani and Hananiah 'overseers' over Jerusalem. Perhaps Joel and Judah presided over a special community in each district.

10. *Jedaiah the son of Joiarib, Jachin*] The parallel passage in 1 Chron. ix. 10 has 'Jedaiah, and Jehoiarib, Jachin.' As these three are the names of well-known priestly houses (cf. 1 Chron. xxiv. 7, Jehoiarib the first, Jedaiah the second, Jachin the one and twentieth in the twenty-four), 'the son of' may possibly be an interpolation. If the text is correct, 'Jedaiah' must here represent a branch of the house of Joiarib.

11. *Seraiah*] 1 Chron. ix. 11, 'Azariah the son of Meshullam.' The same person may be intended, as the same genealogy is given in both lists. If so, the names have possibly been accidentally confused, either through similarity of sound or through corruption in the original text from which the lists were taken. Very probably they were father and son; and the two lists have selected different names to represent the priestly house. Cf. 1 Chron. vii. 13, 'Hilkiah begat Azariah; and Azariah begat Jeraiah.'

Meraioth] In 1 Chron. vi. 7, Meraioth is the grandfather of Ahitub, in Ezra vii. 3 the great-grandfather. But in these genealogies names were freely left out for brevity, and the exact relationship by succession cannot be determined. Names also are repeated in the same family. Meraioth probably occurred often in the line of Seraiah.

was *the ruler of the house of God*] R.V. omits *was*. The same title occurs in connexion curiously enough with the same proper name in 2 Chron. xxxi. 13, 'And Azariah the ruler of the house of God.' It is tempting to suggest that Azariah's name has been substituted for that of Seraiah from a gloss on 'the ruler of the house of God.' If the title is equivalent to that of the High-priest, then Seraiah is the well-known High-priest, the ancestor of Ezra, put to death by Nebuchadnezzar (see Ezra vii. 1; 2 Kings xxv. 18). For the use of the title 'n'gîd' (Vulg. 'princeps'), cf. 1 Chron. xii. 27, 'Jehoiada...leader of the house of Aaron.' But it may denote only a special officer of the Temple. The LXX. renders ἀπέναντι οἴκου τοῦ θεοῦ (reading '*neged*' for '*n'gîd*').

12. *eight hundred twenty and two*] These numbers are not given in 1 Chron.

Adaiah] A fuller genealogy is given for this name than in 1 Chron. ix. 12.

and his brethren, chief of the fathers, two hundred forty 13
and two: and Amashai the son of Azareel, the son of
Ahasai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer, and 14
their brethren, mighty *men* of valour, an hundred twenty
and eight: and their overseer *was* Zabdiel, the son of *one of*
the great *men*.

Also of the Levites: Shemaiah the son of Hashub, the 15
son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni;

13. *chief of the fathers*] R.V. **chiefs of fathers' houses.** From the technical use of the term 'chiefs of fathers' houses,' it is obvious that the figure 242 denotes the number of the retainers of Adaiah and 'his brethren,' who were 'chiefs of fathers' houses.'

Amashai (R.V. **Amashsai**) *the son of Azareel* (R.V. **Azarel**), *the son of Ahasai* (R.V. **Ahzai**), *the son of Meshillemoth*] In 1 Chron. ix. 12, 'Maasai the son of Adiel, the son of Jahzerah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Meshillemith' is clearly the same person. A comparison of the names here will illustrate the way in which proper names were liable to be confused and altered in the process of copying; it will also show how in one list some names are omitted from the full genealogy.

Immer] Cf. vii. 40; Ezra ii. 37.

14. *mighty* men *of valour*] Cf. 1 Chron. ix. 13 'Very able men (lit. mighty men of valour) for the work of the service of the house of God.'

their brethren...an hundred twenty and eight] Query: 'their' an error for 'his'?

In our list of the priests, *vv.* 10—14 we have the following figures:

Jedaiah, Jachin, Seraiah, &c.	= 822
Adaiah, &c.	= 242
Amashsai	= 128
	1192

It is noticeable that these figures do not correspond with the number 1760 mentioned in 1 Chron. ix. 13.

overseer] Cf. ver. 9.

the son of one of *the great* men] so R.V. marg. R.V. text **the son of Haggedolim**. It is a disputed point whether 'Haggedolim' is a proper name. The literal translation would be 'the son of the great ones,' so the LXX. renders Βαδιὴλ υἱὸς τῶν μεγάλων. But who are 'the great ones'? The explanation which has been given that they are the priests mentioned in this section, *vv.* 10—14, is merely a conjecture, which has no other evidence in its favour. Some (e.g. Neteler) think it means 'the high-priests;' and suppose Zabdiel to have been the Sagan or deputy high-priest. On the other hand, if 'Haggedolim' be a proper name, it is a very peculiar one; but cf. ver. 35, 'Gehaharashim.'

15. *Also*] R.V. **And.**

Hashub] R.V. **Hasshub.**

the son of Bunni] Instead of this termination to Shemaiah's genealogy, we find 'of the sons of Merari' in 1 Chron. ix. 14.

16 and Shabbethai and Jozabad, of the chief of the Levites,
had the oversight of the outward business of the house of
17 God. And Mattaniah the son of Micha, the son of Zabdi,
the son of Asaph, *was* the principal to begin the thanks-
giving in prayer: and Bakbukiah the second among his
brethren, and Abda the son of Shammua, the son of Galal,
18 the son of Jeduthun. All the Levites in the holy city *were*
19 two hundred fourscore and four. Moreover the porters,

16. *Shabbethai...Jozabad*] See these names in viii. 7. They do not occur in the parallel list of 1 Chron. ix. 15, 16, where however three other names, Heresh, Galal, and Berechiah are inserted.

chief] R.V. chiefs.

had the oversight] R.V. **who had the oversight.**

the outward business of the house of God] For the use of the adjective 'outward' here, cf. 1 Chron. xxvi. 29, 'of the Izharites, Chenaniah and his sons were for *the outward business* over Israel, for officers and judges.'

Whatever 'the outward business of the house of God' was, it is clearly meant to be contrasted with 'the business, *or* work, of the house of God' (cf. ver. 22 and 1 Chron. xxiii. 4) consisting in the worship and its ritual. It must not be limited in application to the maintenance of the fabric of the Temple and its courts. The significance of the expression appears from a comparison of the two passages quoted above. The Levites had duties as 'officers and judges,' see 1 Chron. xxiii. 4; xxvi. 29; 2 Chron. xix. 8, 11; and this section formed one-sixth of their whole number (1 Chron. xxiii. 4).

17. *Micha*] R.V. **Mica.**

was *the principal*] R.V. **who was the chief.** The expression 'the chief to begin the thanksgiving in prayer' is not very intelligible. The Hebrew for 'the chief to begin' is literally 'the head of the beginning (*t'khillah*) who used to give thanks to the prayer' i.e. after it. The LXX. and Vulg. Vss. follow a text, which differs in one letter, 'the head of the praise' (*t'hillah*), and gives a good sense, viz. 'the head or leader of praise, one who gave thanks in the time of prayer,' (LXX. ἄρχων τοῦ αἴνου καὶ Ἰούδας τῆς προσευχῆς; Vulg. 'princeps ad laudandum et ad confitendum in oratione.') But the obscurity of the Hebrew phrase probably arises from its having been a technical title of the leader of the Temple choir, a choregus.

Bakbukiah the second among his brethren] i.e. second to Mattaniah. Bakbukiah probably corresponds to Bakbakkar in 1 Chron. ix. 15, or to Berechiah in 1 Chron. ix. 16.

Abda] This name appears with the same genealogy as Obadiah in 1 Chron. ix. 16.

From the mention of 'Asaph' and 'Jeduthun' we evidently have in these verses (as in 1 Chron. ix. 14, 15) the class of Levites, who, e.g. in Ezra ii. 41, stand before 'the porters,' i.e. 'the singers.'

18. *the holy city*] Cf. note on ver. 1.

Akkub, Talmon, and their brethren that kept the gates, *were* an hundred seventy and two.

And the residue of Israel, of the priests, *and* the Levites, 20
were in all the cities of Judah, every one in his inheritance.
But the Nethinims dwelt in Ophel: and Ziha and Gispa 21
were over the Nethinims. The overseer also of the Levites 22
at Jerusalem *was* Uzzi the son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micha. Of the sons of Asaph, the singers *were* over the business of the house of

19. *Akkub, Talmon*] In 1 Chron. ix. 17, 'And the porters; Shallum, and Akkub, and Talmon, and Ahiman, and their brethren: Shallum was the chief.'

that kept the gates] R.V. **that kept watch at the gate.**

an hundred seventy and two] 1 Chron. ix. 22, 'two hundred and twelve;' the discrepancy may be another instance of error in transcription.

20. This verse is clearly out of place, interrupting the register of 'the porters' and 'the Nethinim.' It would be more appropriate before *v.* 25.

the residue of Israel] Cf. ver. 1, 'the *rest* of the people,' where the same word is used in the Hebrew.

'Israel' as in ver. 3 (cf. Ezra ii. 70), denoting all the laity irrespective of their tribes.

of the priests, and *the Levites*] R.V. **the priests, the Levites.** The A.V., by inserting 'and,' and the R.V., by preserving the comma between the words, agree in *not* regarding this as an instance of the technical term 'the priests the Levites' which is found so often in Deuteronomy, and occurs elsewhere, e.g. 2 Chron. v. 5, xxiii. 18, xxx. 27.

The words are coordinate although the copula is wanting. As in *v.* 3, and in chap. x. 28 and 34, Israel (or 'the people') with the priests *and* the Levites make up the whole sum of the nation.

21. *the Nethinims*] R.V. **the Nethinim.**

in Ophel] See iii. 26. Their quarters were on the summit of the Hill or Mound, S. of the Temple height.

Ziha and Gispa (R.V. **Gishpa**)] Ziha's name occurs at the head of the Nethinim in Ezra ii. 43; Neh. vii. 46; and there can be little doubt that 'Gishpa' is to be identified with 'Hasupha' in the same list.

22. *Uzzi*] Uzzi's position as overseer of the Levites 'over the business of the house of God' is parallel to that of Shabbethai and Jozabad (ver. 16).

Micha] R.V. **Mica.** Cf. ver. 17.

Of the sons of Asaph, the singers were *over* &c.] R.V. **of the sons of Asaph, the singers, over** &c. The R.V. rightly takes the whole verse to be one sentence, defining firstly the descent and then the duties of Uzzi. The word 'overseer' must be joined with 'over the business': while 'the singers' is in apposition to 'the sons of Asaph.'

The A.V. in dividing the sentence probably followed the LXX. and

23 God. For *it was* the king's commandment concerning
them, that a certain portion *should be* for the singers, due
24 for every day. And Pethahiah the son of Meshezabeel, of
the children of Zerah the son of Judah, *was* at the king's
hand in all matters concerning the people.

Vulg. ('De filiis Asaph cantores in ministerio domus Dei'). The purpose of the division may have been to secure to 'the singers' a separate mention of their office. But (1) they were tacitly included in ver. 17, (2) 'the singers' would not be over 'the business of the house of God.'

the business of the house of God] See note on ver. 16. The 'business' is that of the liturgical worship and the organization necessary for the regular rotation of Levitical service.

23. *For* it was] R.V. **For there was.**

the king's commandment] R.V. **a commandment from the king.**

That this was the Persian king Artaxerxes is shown by the reference to 'the king' in ver. 24, and by the similar instances of favour to the Temple at Jerusalem on the part of Artaxerxes. Cf. ii. 8; Ezra vii. 20—24.

concerning them] Who are spoken of? the singers, the Levites, or their officers and overseers?

The context seems in favour of the Levites. The name of Uzzi who was at once 'overseer' of the Levites and by descent of the family of Asaph, suggested the parenthetical statement, that there was a royal edict in favour of the Levitical community, and a special provision made for the singers.

that a certain portion should be *for*] R.V. **and a settled provision for.** Marg. 'Or, *a sure ordinance concerning*'. The clause is not dependent on (as A.V.), but co-ordinate with its predecessor. The word rendered 'settled provision' (*emanah*) is that rendered 'a sure covenant' in ix. 38. An abstract word, it perhaps denotes the *fixity* of the arrangement on behalf of the singers rather than the nature of its provisions. 'Sure ordinance' is therefore to be preferred as a rendering; and this rendering presents a closer parallel to 'commandment.'

due for every day] R.V. **as every day required.** Cf. xii. 47. Literally, 'the thing of a day on its day,' as LXX. λόγος ἑκάστης ἡμέρας ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ αὐτοῦ. A common Hebrew phrase, e.g. Ex. v. 13, 19, xvi. 4; Lev. xxiii. 37; 1 Kings viii. 59; 2 Kings xxv. 30; 1 Chron. xvi. 37; 2 Chron. viii. 14, xxxi. 16; Ezra iii. 4; Jer. lii. 34; Dan. i. 5.

24. *Pethahiah the son of Meshezabeel* (R.V. **Meshezabel**)...*Zerah*] On 'Zerah the son of Judah' see note on *vv.* 4—6.

at the king's hand] What this exactly meant we are left to conjecture. Pethahiah was in some sort of way an official representative of Jewish interests in connexion with the Persian court. The suggestion (of Reuss) that he resided at Jerusalem, and was the official recipient of the provincial tribute might derive support from the mention of 'the house of the king' in iii. 25. But it is hard to see how any Jewish official of the Persian court, if he resided in Jerusalem, could be said to be 'at the king's hand in all matters concerning the people' in any sense

And for the villages, with their fields, *some* of the children 25
of Judah dwelt at Kirjath-arba, and *in* the villages thereof,
and at Dibon, and *in* the villages thereof, and at Jekabzeel,
and *in* the villages thereof, and at Jeshua, and at Moladah, 26

which would not much rather be applicable to Nehemiah himself. Indeed, if this official was a resident in Jerusalem, it is not easy to believe that the time of Nehemiah's governorship can be referred to.

If he was the Jewish representative at Susa it constitutes an isolated reference in this chapter to a person dwelling outside the borders of Judea.

In spite of this objection it seems more probable that 'at the king's hand' denotes personal residence at the Persian court.

The mention of the fact is parenthetically added in connexion with the royal mandate favourable to the Levites and the singers; and is not therefore, strictly speaking, relevant to the list. The phrase 'at the hand of' seems to denote personal attendance, cf. xiii. 13 'next to them,' 1 Chron. xviii. 17 'And the sons of David were chief about (lit. 'at the hand of,' Vulg. 'ad manum') the king,' xxiii. 28 'their office was to wait on (lit. 'at the hand of,' LXX. ἐπὶ χεῖρα, Vulg. 'sub manu') the sons of Aaron.' In our verse the LXX. renders πρὸς χεῖρα, the Vulg. 'in manu.'

25. *And for the villages, with their fields*] The preposition 'for' = 'with respect to.' The verse takes up the thread which had been interrupted by the parenthesis (21—24).

at Kirjath-arba, and in *the villages thereof*] R.V. **in Kirjath-arba and the towns** (Marg. Heb. *daughters thereof*).

Kirjath-arba, the old name of Hebron (Gen. xxiii. 2; Jos. xiv. 15), the capital of the tribe of Judah (cf. 2 Sam. ii. 1—4). Rawlinson conjectures that 'during the captivity the old name had reasserted itself.' Its employment here is certainly peculiar. But it is more probable that the ancient name reproduces the formal language of the official register. It is noticeable that in Joshua, which contains so many of the towns mentioned in this passage, Hebron is called by its archaic name (Jos. xv. 54). Kirjath-arba, or the city of Arba, was traditionally so called after Arba, one of the Anakim or pre-Canaanite princes. According to others it means 'the city of four quarters,' 'a Tetrapolis.' Its modern name El-Khalil, 'the Friend (of God),' preserves the memory of the patriarch Abraham, who dwelt there (Gen. xiii. xiv. xviii. xxiii.).

It should be observed that hitherto we have had no mention of the Jews after the exile re-occupying Hebron.

'the towns (Heb. daughters) thereof.' By this expression is denoted the hamlets and villages adjacent to a principal town, which were dependent on it in some degree for supplies and for protection, and were originally offshoots. Cf. Num. xxi. 25, 32; Jos. xv. 45; Judg. xi. 26.

Dibon...Jekabzeel] Probably the same as Dimonah and Kabzeel, which occur in connexion with Moladah in Jos. xv. 21, 22, 26.

26. *Jeshua*] Not mentioned elsewhere. Some suppose that the name is a corruption of Shema (Jos. xv. 26.)

Moladah] Cf. Jos. xv. 26.

27 and at Beth-phelet, and at Hazar-shual, and at Beer-sheba,
28 and *in* the villages thereof, and at Ziklag, and at Mekonah,
29 and in the villages thereof, and at En-rimmon, and at
30 Zareah, and at Jarmuth, Zanoah, Adullam, and *in* their villages, *at* Lachish, and the fields thereof, *at* Azekah, and *in* the villages thereof. And they dwelt from Beer-sheba
31 unto the valley of Hinnom. The children also of Benjamin from Geba *dwelt at* Michmash, and Aija, and Beth-el, and
32, 33 *in* their villages, *and at* Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah, Hazor,

Beth-phelet] R.V. **Beth-pelet.** Cf. Jos. xv. 27.

27. *Hazar-shual*] 'Fox-town.' Cf. Jos. xv. 28.

Beer-sheba] The well-known southern limit of Palestine.

28. *Ziklag*] Cf. Jos. xv. 31; 1 Sam. xxx. 1.

29. *En-rimmon*] In Jos. xv. 32 we find this as two places, 'Ain, and Rimmon;' so also in Jos. xix. 7; 1 Chron. iv. 32.

Zareah] R.V. **Zorah.** Cf. Jos. xv. 33, 'in the lowland...Zorah.'

Jarmuth] Cf. Jos. xv. 35; cf. iii. 5.

30. *Zanoah*] Cf. Jos. xv. 34; cf. iii. 13.

Adullam] Cf. Jos. xv. 35.

Lachish] Cf. Jos. xv. 39.

Azekah] Cf. Jos. xv. 35.

And they dwelt] R.V. **So they encamped.**

from Beer-sheba unto the valley of Hinnom] i.e. from the extreme southern point of Israel to the northern boundary of the tribe of Judah, the ravine or valley of Hinnom (Gay-Hinnom = Gehenna). See Jos. xv. 8. On the 'valley of Hinnom,' see note on ii. 13. That this list is of later date than the days of Nehemiah, is a probable inference from a comparison of the numerous towns described in this chapter as being occupied by the men of Judah, with the few names of towns, which, if we may so understand the allusions in chap. iii., were occupied by Jews, at the time of the rebuilding of the walls, i.e. Jericho, Tekoa, Gibeon, Mizpah, Zanoah, Beth-haccerem, Beth-zur, Keilah.

31. *The children also of Benjamin from Geba* dwelt at *Michmash*] R.V. **The children of Benjamin also** dwelt **from Geba** onward, **at Michmash.** The list of Benjamite towns starts from Geba, about 10 or 12 miles N. of Jerusalem, the modern Djibia. It is strange that the R.V. having altered the preposition from 'at' to 'in' in *vv.* 25—29 should leave 'at' unaltered in *vv.* 31, 32.

Aija] Probably the same as Ai, which is mentioned along with 'Michmas' and 'Beth-el' in Ezra ii. 28, where see note.

32. *Anathoth*] See on Ezra ii. 23.

Nob] Cf. 1 Sam. xxii. 11.

Ananiah] Only mentioned here. It has been by some identified with 'beit-Hannina,' a village two miles N. of Jerusalem.

33. *Hazor*] Not elsewhere mentioned, unless it be the same as 'Baal-hazor, which is beside Ephraim' (2 Sam. xiii. 23).

Ramah, Gittaim, Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat, Lod, and Ono, 34, 35
the valley of craftsmen. And of the Levites *were* divisions 36
in Judah, *and* in Benjamin.

Now these *are* the priests and the Levites that went up 12
with Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah,

Ramah] See on Ezra ii. 26.

Gittaim] Cf. 2 Sam. iv. 3.

34. *Hadid*] In Ezra ii. 33, with Lod and Ono.

Zeboim] Cf. 1 Sam. xiii. 18.

Neballat] Only mentioned here, = beit-Nebala, N.W. of Lydda, six miles.

35. *Lod, and Ono*] Cf. vi. 2; Ezra ii. 33; 1 Chron. viii. 12.

the valley of craftsmen] R.V. marg. 'Or, *Gehaharashim*'. See 1 Chr. iv. 14, 'Joab the father of Gehaharashim (marg. Or, *the valley of craftsmen*); for they were craftsmen.' The R.V. treats the expression in that passage as a proper name, in the present as a term descriptive of a locality. The LXX. transliterates γῇ ἀρασελμ: the Vulg. gives 'valle artificum.'

36. were *divisions* in *Judah* and *in Benjamin*] R.V. **certain courses in Judah** were joined **to Benjamin.** The A.V., which gives quite a wrong view of the passage, perhaps followed the Vulg., 'de Levitis portiones Judæ et Benjamin.' The LXX. is very literal, ἀπὸ τῶν Λευιτῶν μερίδες Ἰούδα τῷ Βενιαμείν. The meaning is quite unmistakeable. 'Divisions' or 'sections' of the Levitical community who in former times had been attached to the territory of Judah, were now settled in Benjamin.

Chapter XII.

1. *Now these...Jeshua*] Cf. Ezra ii. 1.

For the list beginning with Seraiah, see the parallel list of names in x. 3—9 and xii. 12—21. The Ezra mentioned in this verse and ver. 13 must not be confounded with 'the Scribe:' he appears in x. 3 as Azariah.

The following table gives a comparison of the three lists:

	x. 3—9.	xii. 1—7.	xii. 12—21.
(1)	Seraiah	Seraiah	Seraiah
(2)	Azariah	Jeremiah	Jeremiah
(3)	Jeremiah	Ezra	Ezra
(4)	Pashhur	Amariah	Amariah
(5)	Amariah	Malluch	Malluchi
(6)	Malchijah	Hattush	(wanting)
(7)	Hattush	Shecaniah	Shebaniah
(8)	Shebaniah	Rehum	Harim
(9)	Malluch	Meremoth	Meraioth
(10)	Harim	Iddo	Iddo
(11)	Meremoth	Ginnethoi	Ginnethon
(12)	Obadiah	Abijah	Abijah
(13)	Daniel	Mijamin	Miniamin

2,3 Jeremiah, Ezra, Amariah, Malluch, Hattush, Shechaniah,
4,5 Rehum, Meremoth, Iddo, Ginnetho, Abijah, Miamin, Maa-
6,7 diah, Bilgah, Shemaiah, and Joiarib, Jedaiah, Sallu, Amok,
Hilkiah, Jedaiah. These *were* the chief of the priests and
8 of their brethren in the days of Jeshua. Moreover the
Levites: Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, *and*

	x. 3—9.	xii. 1—7.	xii. 12—21.
(14)	Ginnethon	Maadiah	Moadiah
(15)	Baruch	Bilgah	Bilgah
(16)	Meshullam	Shemaiah	Shemaiah
(17)	Abijah	and Joiarib	Joiarib
(18)	Mijamin	Jedaiah	Jedaiah
(19)	Maaziah	Sallu	Sallai
(20)	Bilgai	Amok	Amok
(21)	Shemaiah	Hilkiah	Hilkiah
(22)		Jedaiah	Jedaiah

We have, therefore, 22 priestly houses recorded, and there can be little doubt that the number 24 had been restored, but that two of the names have dropped out either in the course of transcription or in consequence of the defectiveness of the original lists. Of the four priestly houses who are mentioned in the lists of Ezra ii. and Neh. vii. as having gone up out of the captivity with Zerubbabel, i.e. Jedaiah, Immer, Pashhur, Harim, we find here the names of (22) Jedaiah and (8) Rehum = Harim. Immer may possibly be concealed in the name of (4) Amariah. Pashhur has dropped out entirely. The opinion of some is that the similarity of names in these lists is accidental, and that the three lists give us the names of individuals living at three different periods, xii. 1—7 in the days of Zerubbabel, x. 1—8 in the days of Eliashib, xii. 12—21 in the days of Joiakim, which happen very often to resemble one another. But the improbability of this needs no demonstration.

7. *chief*] R.V. chiefs.

in the days of Jeshua] Cf. Ezra ii. 2, iii. 2.

8. *Moreover the Levites*] This list of Levite houses which returned along with Zerubbabel consists of eight names, Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, Mattaniah, Bakbukiah, Unni. In Ezra ii. 40—42, the list of the Levites and singers that returned consists of Jeshua, Kadmiel, Hodaviah (?), and the children of Asaph. Other Levitical lists occur in x. 9—14, xii. 24—26. Jeshua and Kadmiel occur in all the lists. Binnui represents 'the sons of Henadad', cf. Ezra iii. 9 with Neh. iii. 24, x. 10, who probably returned to Jerusalem in the year after Zerubbabel. Sherebiah's name occurs in viii. 7, ix. 4, x. 13. Judah is probably to be identified with Hodijah in x. 10. Mattaniah is mentioned in xi. 17 as an Asaphite chief. It is probable therefore that he represents 'the children of Asaph' in Ezra ii. 41, while other families of 'the singers' are represented by Bakbukiah (? = Bukkiah of the sons of Heman, 1 Chron. xxv. 4), who is mentioned in xi. 17, and by Uñno = Unni (1 Chron. xv. 18, 20).

Mattaniah, *which was* over the thanksgiving, he and his brethren. Also Bakbukiah and Unni, their brethren, *were* 9
over against them in the watches.

And Jeshua begat Joiakim, Joiakim also begat Eliashib, 10
and Eliashib begat Joiada, and Joiada begat Jonathan, and 11
Jonathan begat Jaddua.

the thanksgiving] R.V. marg. 'Or, *the choirs*'. The Hebrew word only occurs here; and the LXX. not understanding it renders ἐπὶ τῶν χειρῶν. The Vulgate gives 'super hymnos.' Compare the description of Mattaniah, the Asaphite, in xi. 17, 'the chief to begin the thanksgiving in prayer.'

9. *and Unni*] R.V. **and Unno.** The K'ri reads 'and Unni,' the C'thib 'and Unno.' The C'thib reading might, however, be rendered as the verb which occurs in Ezra iii. 11, 'And they sang one to another' (cf. Deut. xxi. 7, xxvii. 14), with the sense of 'And their brethren responded to them in choral antiphon.' This suggestion, however, apart from grammatical objections, requires us to suppose that Bakbukiah's name has been interpolated. For this there is no evidence; and so far as the sense is concerned, the idea of antiphonal singing is sufficiently expressed in our own text. The confusion between 'Unno' and 'Unni' arises from the commonest source of variation in the Hebrew text, the similarity of Yod and Vâv (י and ו). But the original reading was very probably 'Also Bakbukiah and Unni [and] their brethren;' Yôd, the last letter of Unni, having fallen out before the Vâv, the Vâv became, instead of the copula, the last letter of 'Unno.' Another conjectural and less probable emendation of the text is to read 'Obadiah' instead of 'Unni,' in order to bring the verse in closer correspondence with ver. 25.

over against them] The same expression as in 2 Chron. vii. 6, 'The priests sounded trumpets before them,' where probably the meaning is 'over against, i.e. in answer to, the Levites.' See also ver. 24.

in the watches] R.V. **in wards.** LXX. εἰς τὰς ἐφημερίας. Vulg. 'in officio suo.' The Hebrew could equally well be rendered 'as watches, i.e. for the purpose of keeping watch.' But the sense required is more probably 'according to wards,' 'in wards by rotation.' Cf. xiii. 14.

10, 11. The lists of the high-priests in 1 Chron. vi. 3—15 concluded with Jehozadak, who 'went into captivity when the LORD carried away Judah and Jerusalem by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.' Jehozadak's son was Jeshua (see Ezra iii. 1), who returned from the captivity with Zerubbabel. The present list of the high-priesthood follows directly upon that given in 1 Chron. vi.

Joiakim] From the special mention of this high-priest in *vv.* 12 and 26, we may conjecture that during his tenure of office the houses of the priests and Levites were registered or reconstituted.

Eliashib] The high-priest in Nehemiah's period of governorship (iii. 1; xiii. 4, 7, 28). His son Joiada, who is called Juda by Josephus (*Ant.* xi. 7. 1), is mentioned again in xiii. 28. A slight difficulty is presented by the name Jonathan. In ver. 22, we find 'Johanan' stands

12 And in the days of Joiakim were priests, the chief of the
13 fathers: of Seraiah, Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Hananiah; of
14 Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jehohanan; of Melicu,
15 Jonathan; of Shebaniah, Joseph; of Harim, Adna; of
16 Meraioth, Helkai; of Iddo, Zechariah; of Ginnethon, Me-
17 shullam; of Abijah, Zichri; of Miniamin, of Moadiah,
18 Piltai; of Bilgah, Shammua; of Shemaiah, Jehonathan;
19, 20 and of Joiarib, Mattenai; of Jedaiah, Uzzi; of Sallai,
21 Kallai; of Amok, Eber; of Hilkiah, Hashabiah; of Jedaiah,
Nethaneel.

22 The Levites in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, and Johanan,
and Jaddua, *were* recorded chief of the fathers: also the
23 priests, to the reign of Darius the Persian. The sons of

between 'Joiada' and 'Jaddua;' and in ver. 23, this Johanan is called the son of Eliashib. We must either suppose that Jonathan is here a mistake for Johanan, or that 'Jonathan' was high-priest for a short period, and was succeeded by his better known brother Johanan.

Jaddua] There is no reason to doubt that this is the same Jaddua, who was high-priest at the time that Alexander passed along the borders of Palestine on his march into Egypt. The probably legendary account of Alexander's visit to Jerusalem, and his meeting with the high-priest Jaddua, attended by the priests in their most splendid robes, is narrated by Josephus (*Ant.* xi. 8. 5).

The occurrence of Jaddua's name shows that the compilation of these books must be later than 340—333 B.C.

Between Eliashib (xiii. 28) who was high-priest in 432 B.C. and Jaddua who was high-priest in 333 B.C. there are thus only two names, or at the most three, recorded in this list, i.e. Joiada, Johanan or (? and) Jonathan.

12. *And in the days of Joiakim*] See note on ver. 10.

the chief of the fathers] R.V. **heads of fathers' houses.**

On the list contained in these verses, see note on ver. 1.

14. *Melicu*] R.V. **Malluchi.** Marg. 'Another reading is, *Melicu*'. The K'thib gives Malluchi; the Q'ri Melicu. The LXX. reads Μαλούχ, the Vulgate 'Milico.'

17. *of Miniamin, of Moadiah*] The representative of the house of Miniamin has been omitted.

22. were *recorded chief of the fathers*] R.V. **were recorded heads of fathers' houses.** The language is obscure on account of the abruptness with which the statement is introduced. The meaning seems to be that during the four high-priesthoods mentioned, a full register of the heads of fathers' houses among the Levites was kept.

to the reign of Darius the Persian] R.V. **in** (marg. Or, *to*) **the reign.** The preposition (literally 'upon') concerning which the doubt is expressed in the alternative rendering of the R.V. is rendered in the LXX. ἐν βασιλείᾳ and the Vulg. 'in regno.' It may be considered

Levi, the chief of the fathers, *were* written in the book of the chronicles, even until the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib. And the chief of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brethren over against them, to praise *and* to give thanks, according 24

very questionable whether the rendering 'to' is admissible; 'in' is certainly preferable.

Darius the Persian] That this Darius is Darius III. Codomannus (336—331) is the most obvious explanation. And if the Jaddua mentioned in this verse be, as there is really no reason to doubt, the high-priest of Alexander's time, the mention of Darius III. Codomannus, the contemporary Persian king, presents no difficulty. On the title 'the Persian,' see the Introduction.

The alternative preferred by some commentators, viz. that Darius Nothus (424—404 B.C.), the successor of Artaxerxes, is intended, is improbable after the mention of Jaddua's enrolment, unless it be maintained that this Jaddua is not the high-priest of Alexander's time. But it must also be evident that the reference to Jaddua is to his tenure of the high-priesthood. The attempt to reconcile the mention of Jaddua with the allusion to Darius Nothus, by the suggestion that Darius Nothus was king when Jaddua was born, only arises from the presupposition that none but Nehemiah could have written this chapter.

23. *The sons of Levi*] Here we have the heading or title of another enrolment. The expression 'the sons of Levi' is to be noted, and compared with the mention of 'the Levites' in *vv.* 8 and 22. The whole house of Levi is probably intended, priests and Levites together.

in the book of the chronicles] Clearly not the same as our 'Chronicles,' although the title is the same; 'the words of the days' was the regular Hebrew term for annals of any kind. The book here referred to seems to have been an official document, and to have been brought down to the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib, hence presumably down to the close of the fifth century B.C.

even until the days...Eliashib] Some connect with the following verse.

24. *And the chief of the Levites*] Once more a brief list is given of the chief Levite families.

Hashabiah] This name occurs in x. 12, and Ezra viii. 19, but not in Neh. xii. 8, 9. Probably the same as Hashabneiah (ix. 5).

Sherebiah] Cf. ver. 8, ix. 5, x. 13; Ezr. viii. 18.

Jeshua the son of Kadmiel] We have here an almost certain error in the text 'Jeshua ben-Kadmiel' instead of 'Jeshua, Bani, (or Binnui), Kadmiel.' Cf. ver. 8, x. 9. In favour of this emendation is to be cited the reading of the LXX. υἱοὶ (b'nê) Καδμιήλ.

over against them] Cf. ver. 9. LXX. κατεναντίον αὐτῶν, Vulg. 'per vices suas.'

to praise and (R.V. to) *give thanks*] The reference is to the antiphonal singing of the Levites in the Temple worship.

according to the commandment of David the man of God] The re-

to the commandment of David the man of God, ward over
25 against ward; Mattaniah, and Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, Akkub, *were* porters keeping the ward
26 at the thresholds of the gates. These *were* in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor, and of Ezra the priest, the scribe.

27 And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they

ference is to the organization of the Levitical singers by David mentioned in 1 Chron. xvi. 4, xxiii. 30.

On the title 'the man of God' applied to David cf. 2 Chron. viii. 14.

ward over (R.V. omit) *against ward*] The same phrase occurs in 1 Chron. xxvi. 16.

25. *Mattaniah*] Cf. ver. 8, xi. 17. Mattaniah representing Asaphites.

Bakbukiah] Cf. ver. 9, xi. 17, representing the Hemanites, cf. 1 Chr. xxv. 4.

Obadiah] Probably the same as Abda of the family of Jeduthun, xi. 17.

These three names are the names of singers who were also porters, and should probably be separated from the next three, who were only porters.

Meshullam] Probably the same as Shallum (1 Chr. ix. 17; Ezra ii. 42).

Talmon, Akkub] Cf. xi. 19; 1 Chr. ix. 17.

at the thresholds of the gates] R.V. **at the storehouses of the gates.** The A.V. gives the rendering which is favoured by the Vulgate 'vestibulorum ante portas,' and by the chief Hebrew commentators, e.g. Rashi and Aben Ezra. The R.V. however is undoubtedly right. The Hebrew only occurs elsewhere in the O.T. in 1 Chron. xxvi. 15, 17, 'storehouse.' The temple was a treasury as well as a sanctuary.

26. *These* were *in the days of Joiakim* &c.] As verses 22 and 23 refer to a later period than that here mentioned, this summary probably refers to the list contained in *vv.* 12—21. Whether it also refers to 24—25 is a doubtful point. But the awkwardness of the verse in its present position, lends some colour to the view that verses 22 and 23 are an interpolation by the compiler.

It will be observed that two periods are mentioned, the period of Joiakim (circ. 500 B.C.), and that of Nehemiah and Ezra (460—430 B.C.). The verse was clearly written at a date considerably later than Nehemiah's lifetime.

27—43. The Dedication of the Walls.

In the description of this solemn event, there is a return to the use of the 1st Pers. Sing. (*vv.* 31, 38, 40). The compiler returns to the Memoirs of Nehemiah, from which he makes extracts, while he no doubt exercises a full liberty of abridgement and revision.

27. *at the dedication of the wall*] It is only natural to suppose that the dedication of the walls took place at no long interval after their completion. The walls were finished on the 25th of the month Elul (vi. 15)

sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings, and with singing, *with* cymbals, psalteries, and with harps. And the sons of the singers gathered 28
themselves together, both out of the plain country round

or September. According to 2 Macc. i. 18 Nehemiah on the 25th of Chislev (December) celebrated the restoration of the altar. If this date may be relied upon as representing a true tradition of the solemn dedication described in these verses, exactly three months elapsed between the completion and the dedication of the walls. It has been by some considered improbable that the Feast of Tabernacles and the Sealing of the Covenant (viii.—x.) would have taken place before the Dedication described in these verses; and accordingly the events narrated in those chapters have been ascribed to the following year.

Rawlinson is of opinion that 'the *nexus* of the remainder of this chapter with the next and the date given in chap. xiii. 6, make it certain that the ceremony was deferred for the space of nearly twelve years. Perhaps Nehemiah required an express permission from the Persian king before he could venture on a solemnity which might have been liable to misrepresentation.'

But the unlikelihood of this hypothesis cannot be thus disposed of. (1) Is it probable that 12 years should have been permitted to elapse between the triumphant accomplishment of Nehemiah's work and its religious consecration? (2) The *nexus* of the remainder of this chapter with xiii. 1—3 is very close, but a completely new section, with marked difference of style, opens at xiii. 4 and denotes the resumption of the more colloquial extracts from the Memoirs of Nehemiah. (3) The mention of the date, twelve years later, in xiii. 6 refers to the events described in the immediate context; and there is no probability that it would also be applicable to the preceding section xii. 27—43. If xiii. 6 were, as has been supposed, so closely connected with xii. 27—43, this mention of the date would surely have been placed in chap. xii.

out of all their places] Explained in the two next verses. Cf. xi. 3, 20.

to keep the dedication with gladness] literally 'to make dedication and gladness' (LXX. ποιῆσαι ἐγκαίνια καὶ εὐφροσύνην). 'Dedication.' Heb. *Khanukkah*. The Jewish Feast of Dedication to commemorate the purification of the Temple by Judas the Maccabee (165 B.C.) was held in mid-winter (Adar 25). See John x. 22; 1 Macc. iv. 60.

with thanksgivings] The LXX. transliterates ἐν θωδαθᾷ. Among the Psalms appropriate to be sung on such an occasion some have suggested Pss. cxxii. cxlvii.

cymbals, psalteries, and with harps] Cf. 1 Chron. xiii. 8. 'Psaltery' = *nebel*, a harp: 'harp' = *kinnor*, a kind of guitar.

28. *the plain country*] R.V. the plain. Marg. 'Or, *circuit*'. The word here used, 'the kikkar,' is technically applied to the Jordan valley, e.g. Gen. xiii. 10—12, xix. 17; 2 Sam. xviii. 23. Here, however, as in iii. 22, it seems very doubtful whether this application is at all possible at a time when the territory occupied by the Jews was of so limited an

29 about Jerusalem, and from the villages of Netophathi; also
from the house of Gilgal, and out of the fields of Geba and
Azmaveth: for the singers had builded them villages round
30 about Jerusalem. And the priests and the Levites purified
themselves, and purified the people, and the gates, and the
31 wall. Then I brought up the princes of Judah upon the

area. If the special signification be here retained, only the southernmost portion of the Jordan valley, the district of Jericho, can be intended. The other and more probable alternative is to give the word its strict meaning of 'the circle,' and to suppose that it is here used to denote the country 'round about Jerusalem.' This is not improbable; for (1) the word does not necessarily mean a level surface, but something circular; (2) the country villages occupied by the singers (ver. 29) were in the vicinity of Jerusalem. In confirmation of this, it should be remembered that, even in its special application, it is generally found with a qualifying substantive, e.g. 'the plain, or kikkar=circuit, of the Jordan.' (Gen. xiii. 10, 11; 1 Kings vii. 46. Cf. Matt. iii. 5, ἡ περίχωρος τοῦ Ἰορδάνου).

of Netophathi] R.V. **of the Netophathites.** See note on Ezra ii. 22.

29. *from the house of Gilgal*] R.V. **from Beth-gilgal.** Possibly to be identified with the Gilgal of 2 Kings ii. 1, iv. 38, and if so it was about 14 miles N. of Jerusalem.

Geba] Cf. xi. 31.

Azmaveth] See note on Ezra ii. 24.

30. *purified themselves*] Cf. Ezra vi. 20. The description of the sacrifices offered by Hezekiah on the occasion of a national purification should be compared, 2 Chron. xxix. 20—24.

the people...the gates...the walls] i.e. the people were purified in order that they might engage in the solemn dedication of their city walls without violation of the laws of purity. 'The gates and walls' were probably sprinkled, both as a sign of the dedication and to remove defilement from the path of the sacred procession.

31—42. Nehemiah's description of the dedication of the walls.

Two processions headed by the priests and Levites started from near the Valley or Jaffa Gate, and proceeded, the one by the northern, the other by the southern wall, together accomplishing the complete circuit, and meeting one another in the open space on the eastern side of the Temple.

31. *the princes of Judah*] i.e. all the nobles of the nation.

upon the wall] Much turns upon the meaning of the preposition here used. The words in the Hebrew, 'from above, with respect to the wall' have been considered by some to mean 'beyond, at a little distance from the wall;' by others 'over against the wall.' But a comparison with its use in 2 Chron. xiii. 4 (='upon'), Jonah iv. 6 (='over') shows that the rendering of the English version may very well be defended.

wall, and appointed two great *companies of them that gave* thanks, whereof *one* went on the right hand upon the wall toward the dung gate: and after them went Hoshaiah, and 32
half of the princes of Judah, and Azariah, Ezra, and Me- 33
shullam, Judah, and Benjamin, and Shemaiah, and Jeremiah, 34
and *certain* of the priests' sons with trumpets; *namely*, 35
Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Michaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph: and his brethren, Shemaiah, and Azarael, 36

two great companies of them that gave *thanks*] R.V. **two great companies that gave thanks and went in procession.** Literally 'And I appointed two great thanksgivings and processions.' The LXX. rendered καὶ ἔστησαν δύο περὶ αἰνέσεως μεγάλους. The Vulg. 'statui duos magnos choros laudantium' is clearly the origin of the A.V. rendering. The Hebrew word for 'procession' occurs only here in the O.T.

whereof one *went on the right hand...dung gate*] We have here to supply the words 'whereof one went,' which seem to have slipped out of the text. They are needed in order to correspond with 'the other company' in ver. 38, 'the right hand;' facing towards the Temple, the procession moving to the right marched along the southern wall. The starting point seems to have been 'the valley gate' of ii. 13. 'Towards the dung gate.' Cf. iii. 14.

32. *and after them*] i.e. behind this procession of singers and musicians came the company consisting of one-half of the princes, headed by Hoshaiah, of whose official position we are not told.

33. *Azariah, Ezra*] From a comparison of xii. 1 and 13 with x. 2, we might suppose that these were the names of the same priestly house.

Meshullam] Cf. x. 8.

34. *Judah, and Benjamin*] The occurrence of the two names together favours the view that the two tribes contributed to each wing of the procession one half of their numbers. Cf. Ezra i. 5, iv. 1, x. 9. Others, however, prefer to think that they are names of certain princes.

Shemaiah] Cf. xii. 6.

Jeremiah] Cf. x. 3, xii. 1, 13.

35. certain *of the priests' sons with trumpets*] Apparently a special company following the heads of the priestly houses, and preceding the conclusion of the procession which consisted of the trained musicians. Their names have apparently for brevity's sake been omitted; they were undoubtedly recorded like the names of the priestly trumpeters in the other procession (*v.* 41).

namely, *Zechariah*] R.V. omits *namely*. Zechariah, of the family of Mattaniah, seems to have led the house of Asaph. His company was quite distinct from that of the young trumpeters. This was the company of singers corresponding to that in *v.* 42.

36. *Azarael...Nethaneel*] R.V. **Azarel...Nethanel.** These two names recall 'Nethaniah and Asharelah, the sons of Asaph,' in 1 Chron. xxv. 2.

Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethaneel, and Judah, Hanani, with
the musical instruments of David the man of God, and
37 Ezra the scribe before them. And at the fountain gate,
which *was* over against them, they went up by the stairs
of the city of David, at the going up of the wall, above the
38 house of David, even unto the water gate east*ward*. And
the other *company of them that gave* thanks went over against
them, and I after them, and the half of the people upon the
wall, from beyond the tower of the furnaces even unto the
39 broad wall; and from above the gate of Ephraim, and

David the man of God] Cf. ver. 24.

Ezra...before them] The mention of Ezra's name here seems to indicate that he held in respect of the 'right hand' procession the same position occupied by Nehemiah in the other. If so, the words 'before them' will mean, not at the head of the professional musicians (which was Zechariah's place), but at the head of the whole civil and religious procession. His place in the procession would then be before Hoshaiah and half of 'the princes of Judah' (*vv.* 31, 32).

37. *at* (R.V. by) *the fountain gate*] For the position of this gate, see note on iii. 15.

which was *over against them*] R.V. and straight before them. Apparently at this point, instead of following the wall round the spurs of the Ophel, the procession went straight on up the steps ascending the brow of the hill.

the stairs of the city of David] Cf. iii. 26.

above the house of David] This traditional site seems to have been on the S.E. angle of Ophel. The procession keeping to the ridge above it, moved along in a direction due north, 'even unto the water gate, eastward,' i.e. E. of the Temple.

38. *over against* them] R.V. to meet them. The line of march of the other procession was by the northern wall. By an ingenious conjecture, Reuss, altering the Hebrew word (= to meet them) by the addition of one consonant, proposes to read 'on the left hand,' balancing the words in *v.* 31.

and I after them] Nehemiah, following the thanksgiving company of Levites and singers and musicians, marched, like Ezra, at the head of the other half of the princes and the people.

and the half, &c.] R.V. with the half, &c. The other half of the princes, priests, men of Judah and Benjamin, and musicians.

from beyond] R.V. above. This seems to mean at a little distance from, i.e. to the north of (see, however, note on *v.* 31).

the tower of the furnaces] Cf. iii. 11.

even unto the broad wall] Cf. iii. 8.

39. *from above*] R.V. above.

the gate of Ephraim] This gate is not mentioned in chap. iii. It was situated probably at about the centre of the northern wall, and was so called because through it passed the main road to Ephraim.

above the old gate, and above the fish gate, and the tower of Hananeel, and the tower of Meah, even unto the sheep gate: and they stood still in the prison gate. So stood the 40
two *companies of them that gave* thanks in the house of God, and I, and the half of the rulers with me: and the priests; 41
Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Michaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, *and* Hananiah, with trumpets; and Maaseiah, and 42
Shemaiah, and Eleazar, and Uzzi, and Jehohanan, and Malchijah, and Elam, and Ezer. And the singers sang loud, with Jezrahiah *their* overseer. Also that day they 43
offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced: for God had made

above the old gate] R.V. **by the old gate.** Cf. iii. 6.

above (R.V. **by**) *the fish gate*] Cf. iii. 3.

39. Cf. iii. 2.

Hananeel] R.V. **Hananel.**

Meah] R.V. **Hammeah.** Marg. Or, *The hundred.*

the sheep gate] Cf. iii. 1.

the prison gate] R.V. **the gate of the guard.** In iii. 25, we have mention of 'the court of the guard.' The gate here mentioned we should expect to be one of the gates of the Temple precincts, leading from the north side into the open space to the east of the Temple. It is an objection that from the mention of 'the court of the guard' (iii. 25) we should infer that it lay on the south side of the Temple; and if so (which is very unlikely), that the procession led by Nehemiah would have marched past the halting-place of the other company.

It is noticeable that the concluding clause is not found in the best text of the LXX. It may possibly represent a later insertion on the part of a scribe who wished to assign a halting-place to this company.

40. *rulers*] R.V. marg. 'Or, *deputies*'. In *v.* 31, 'the princes.'

and I, and the half of the rulers with me] We have here rather fuller details of Nehemiah's company to correspond with the description of the other in *vv.* 32—36.

41. *and the priests*] These seven names correspond to the 'certain of the priests' sons with trumpets' in *v.* 35, where the names have dropped out.

42. *And Maaseiah*] The divisions or courses of the Levitical musicians, eight in number, corresponding to what we find in *vv.* 35, 36.

the singers sang loud] Lit. 'caused to hear,' cf. 1 Chron. xv. 19. The LXX. ἠκούσθησαν. Vulg. 'clare cecinerunt.'

Jezrahiah their *overseer*] Jezrahiah as leader of the musicians corresponds to Zechariah in the other company (*v.* 35).

43. *Also that day*] R.V. **And...that day.**

great sacrifices] Cf. Ezra vi. 17.

God had made them rejoice, &c.] 2 Chron. xx. 27, 'for the LORD had made them to rejoice over their enemies.'

them rejoice *with* great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off.

44 And at that time were some appointed over the chambers for the treasures, for the offerings, for the firstfruits, and for the tithes, to gather into them out of the fields of the cities

the wives also] R.V. **and the women also.** The women and children who were present on the occasion of national gatherings (e.g. viii. 2) would participate in the festivities.

was heard even afar off] Cf. the very similar statement in Ezr. iii. 13, 'for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.'

44.—XIII. **4.** This section, in which the Memoirs of Nehemiah probably only form the outline of the Compiler's work, falls into two groups, (*a*) 44—47, dealing with Levitical organization, and (*b*) xiii. 1—4, relations with foreign peoples. The 1st person sing. is dropped.

44. *at that time*] R.V. **on that day.** This is not an allusion to the day of rejoicing in the previous verse ('that day' *v.* 43), but a general definition of time which the Compiler uses again in xiii. 1. It is only a little less indefinite than 'in those days,' xiii. 15, 23.

some] R.V. **men.**

the chambers] The Hebrew word here used occurs elsewhere only in iii. 30, and xiii. 7.

for the treasures] As in xiii. 13, Nehemiah records his special appointment of 'treasurers over the treasuries' whose business it was 'to distribute unto their brethren.' The appointments mentioned in this verse are probably of a somewhat different nature. The men 'appointed over the chambers' were the regular receivers and custodians of the treasure, i.e. the firstfruits and tithes, &c.; the four appointed by Nehemiah were commissioners for the purpose of securing an honest distribution.

for the treasures] Either a general term denoting 'stores' and 'provisions,' of which 'the heave-offerings' are items, or a specific term, standing at the head of the list, and denoting special dedications and wealthy gifts. The former is the more probable alternative.

the offerings] R.V. **the heave offerings.**

the firstfruits] The use of this word seems here to include 'the firstfruits' and 'firstlings' mentioned in x. 35—37.

the tithes] See on **x.** 37, 38.

It will be observed that there is no reference here to any tithe of cattle. The chambers are only intended for receiving the produce of the field (xiii. 12). As this passage is clearly based upon Nehemiah's own Memoirs, it has afforded support to the theory that the cattle tithe was introduced into the text of Lev. xxvii. 30, 32, after the time of Nehemiah. See note at the end of chap. x.

out of the fields of the cities] R.V. **according to the fields of the cities.** The point of this clause is rather obscure. It probably refers to the

the portions of the law for the priests and Levites: for Judah rejoiced for the priests and for the Levites that waited. And both the singers and the porters kept the 45
ward of their God, and the ward of the purification, according to the commandment of David, *and* of Solomon his son. For in the days of David and Asaph of old *there* 46

method of storing, rather than to the size of the fields or to the succession in which the offerings were received and the tithe exacted.

An account was taken of the contributions from the fields of each city.

the portions of the law] R.V. **the portions appointed by the law.** Marg. 'Heb. *of the law*'. A unique phrase in the O.T. denoting the special requirements of the Levitical law.

Judah rejoiced &c.] The readiness of the people generally ('Judah') to support the priests and Levites according to 'the law' was due to their appreciation of their religious services. In proportion to their zeal for the priests and Levites it was necessary to provide officers to receive and regulate the contribution.

that waited] R.V. Marg. 'Heb. *stood*'.

In Deuteronomy the phrase 'to stand before the LORD' is the technical term for the ministrations of the priests. Here we find it used of the offices of 'priests and Levites.' In 1 Chron. vi. 32, 33 'And they waited on their office according to their order. And these are they that waited,' it is applied to the Levites.

45. *And both the singers and the porters kept*] R.V. **And they kept... and so did the singers and the porters.** The verse, according to the rendering of the R.V. states first that the priests and Levites performed the due ceremonial obligations, and then that the same strict conformity to rule was practised by the singers and porters. The verb 'kept' has to be supplied in the second clause.

This is preferable to the suggestion that the second clause is one of a different character, = 'and the singers and the porters were at their post according to the commandment of David' &c. The ground for this alternative rendering is the supposition that the singers and porters would not be subject to the same laws of purification.

kept the ward of their God, and the ward of the purification] The word rendered 'ward' means here 'that which has to be observed;' 'a charge,' in the same sense in which it occurs in Num. ix. 23 'they kept the charge of the LORD;' 2 Chron. xiii, 11 'For we keep the charge of the LORD our God.' Cf. Gen. xxvi. 5.

It is therefore to be distinguished from its more concrete use in Neh. xii. 9, 24, xiii. 30, where it refers to the 'posts' of the Levites.

according to the commandment...and *of Solomon his son*] The reference is one of a general character to the regulations of the Temple services ascribed by the Chronicler to David (1 Chron. xxiii.—xxvi.) and Solomon (2 Chron. viii. 14).

'And of Solomon.' The word 'and' must have accidentally dropped out of the Hebrew text, and must be restored.

46. *in the days of David and Asaph of old*] This combination of

were chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanks-
47 giving unto God. And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel, and in the days of Nehemiah, gave the portions of the singers and the porters, every day his portion: and they sanctified *holy things* unto the Levites; and the Levites sanctified *them* unto the children of Aaron.

names may be illustrated by other examples in the writings of the Chronicler (2 Chr. xxix. 30, xxxv. 15).

The LXX. omits the copula between the names, *ἐν ἡμέραις Δαυὶδ Ἀσὰφ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς πρῶτος τῶν ᾀδόντων*. This may represent the original reading. If so, it is the mention of David in the previous verse which occasions here the parenthetical statement that in those days the great Asaph was 'overseer' of the singers. We should then render 'in the days of David Asaph was of old chief.'

there were *chief*] R.V. Marg. 'Another reading is *there were chiefs*'. The plural 'chiefs' is the reading of the K'ri, which is also found in the Vulgate 'erant principes constituti cantorum.' If the reading of the first clause 'in the days of David and Asaph' be retained, the plural 'chiefs' with the allusion to a general custom, instead of to a particular example, is probably to be preferred. For the position of 'chief' of the singers associated with Asaph, see 1 Chron. xvi. 5, 7, xxv. 1, 2, 9.

songs of praise and thanksgiving] In the English versions the punctuation gives the meaning as of a new clause 'And there were songs of praise' &c. Others make these words also dependent on 'chief' or 'chiefs.'

There is no corresponding archæological reference to the position of the porters. The Chronicler throughout his work shows a marked preference for the interests of 'the singers' as compared with 'the porters.'

47. *in the days of Zerubbabel, and in the days of Nehemiah*] The mention of Nehemiah in the 3rd person along with Zerubbabel is an almost convincing proof that the sentence was not from the hand of Nehemiah; but that it was written (probably by the Chronicler) at a considerable interval of time since Nehemiah's death. The two men are here mentioned as the two heroes of their generation, under whom Israel was loyal to their Temple.

gave...sanctified] The participles in the Heb. show the continuous habit.

every day his portion] R.V. **as every day required.** In xi. 23, we are told a daily provision for the singers was one of the commands of the Persian king: but there was also doubtless a regular daily payment on their behalf made by the people.

sanctified holy things *unto the Levites*] R.V. **sanctified for the Levites.** 'They sanctified,' i.e. all Israel (not 'the singers and the porters') set apart for the use of those who served God. The word 'sanctify' is therefore equivalent to 'devote' or dedicate in this connexion: cf. Lev. xxvii. 14, 16 sqq. 'sanctify a house...a field;' 1 Chron. xxvi. 27 'Out of the spoil won in battles did they dedicate to repair the house of the LORD.' There is no idea of a succession of ritual acts of consecration.

On that day they read in the book of Moses in the audi- 13
ence of the people; and therein was found written, that the
Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the
congregation of God for ever; because they met not the 2
children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired
Balaam against them, that *he* should curse them: howbeit

the children of Aaron] This expression only occurs in our books here and x. 38. In neither passage have we the words of Nehemiah himself but of the Compiler, who was probably also the Chronicler, with whom the term is a favourite one for 'the priesthood,' e.g. 2 Chr. xiii. 9, 10, xxxi. 19, xxxv. 14.

The sanctifying of Israel for the Levites consisted in the payment of the tithes to the house of Levi; the sanctifying on the part of the Levites for the priests, in the payment of 'the tithe of the tithes' (see Neh. x. 38) in accordance with Num. xviii. 26.

1—3. SEPARATION FROM THE MIXED MULTITUDE.

1. *On that day*] See note on xii. 44.

they read] Literally 'it was read,' without any intimation that the Levites were the readers.

the book of Moses] A short form for that which is found in viii. 1, 'the book of the law of Moses.'

that the Ammonite and the Moabite] The passage which had excited attention was doubtless Deut. xxiii. 3—6, which opens with the following prohibition, '*An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter into the assembly* of the LORD; even to the tenth generation shall none belonging to them enter into the assembly of the LORD *for ever*.'

come into the congregation] R.V. **enter into the assembly.** It is important that the words of Deuteronomy should be adhered to in the quotation: and 'assembly' (qahal) not 'congregation' (êdah) is the word generally used by the Deuteronomist.

2. *because they met not*, &c.] Cf. Deut. xxiii. 4, '*Because they met* you *not with bread and with water* in the way when ye came forth out of Egypt; and because they (Heb. he) *hired against* thee *Balaam* the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia *to curse* thee.'

Balaam is referred to by the Deuteronomist as the prophet whose curse would be fatal; the Deuteronomist writer, like the prophet Micah (vi. 5) follows the Jehovist account in Num. xxii.—xxiv., and shows no sign of acquaintance with the Elohist's description of Balaam (Num. xxxi. 8, 16) as an instigator of the Midianite plot to corrupt the children of Israel.

but hired] The verb in the Hebrew is in the singular 'he hired', as in Deut. xxiii. 4, referring possibly to Balak the son of Zippor in Num. xxii. 2.

against them] Literally 'against him', i.e. Israel, corresponding to the singular 'against thee' in Deut. xxiii. 4.

that he *should curse them*] R.V. **to curse them.**

howbeit our God] The remainder of the verse gives in general terms the substance of Deut. xxiii. 5, 6.

3 our God turned the curse into a blessing. Now it came to pass, when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude.

4 And before this, Eliashib the priest, having the oversight

3. *Now*] R.V. And. The A.V. begins a new paragraph with this verse; which however continues the preceding verses, giving the result of the action taken.

they separated] 'They,' impersonal, but evidently the leaders of the people are referred to. It does not appear whether the words 'they separated from Israel' denote merely ceremonial exclusion from participation in the worship and festivals of the holy people, or the forcible ejectment from their borders. The practical impossibility of so summary a policy is an objection to the latter interpretation. The parallel in ix. 2 gives some support to the former alternative; and the instance recorded by Nehemiah in the following verses, 4—14, shows that Nehemiah's anger was kindled not at the presence of a stranger but at his connexion with the high-priest, and at the fact of his not being 'separated from' the Temple.

all the mixed multitude] The use of the Hebrew word ''ereb' here without an article may be illustrated by Ex. xii. 38. There, as here, the word denotes the large body of strangers, members of other races, attached by ties of marriage or by commercial interests to the people of Israel. Their proneness to lead the Israelites astray was proverbial, cf. Num. xi. 4.

PART IV. NEHEMIAH'S SECOND VISIT.

xiii. 4—9. His Vindication of the Sanctity of the Temple.
10—14. His Provision for the Maintenance of the Levites.
15—22. His Measures to uphold the Observance of the Sabbath.
23—29. His Action against Mixed Marriages.
30, 31. His Concluding Words.

4—31. NEHEMIAH'S MEMOIRS RESUMED.

4—9. An incident twelve years later: Eliashib's concession of a chamber in the Temple to Tobiah, and its purification by Nehemiah. For Nehemiah's action and the necessity for it, cf. Malachi ii. 1—9.

4. *And before this*] R.V. Now before this. Clearly the date referred to is that of Nehemiah's return to Jerusalem after his residence at the court described in *vv.* 6, 7. We may assume that Nehemiah's Memoirs embraced the whole interval of twelve years. The Compiler, however, makes no extract from the intervening portion. The words 'before this' have therefore no reference to the events of the preceding verses; their retention only shows the exactness with which the extract is reproduced.

Eliashib the priest] There is scarcely any reason to doubt that this is the same as 'Eliashib the high-priest' mentioned in *v.* 28, and in iii. 1, 20, whose name occurs in the priestly lists (xii. 10, 22). That

of the chamber of the house of our God, *was* allied unto Tobiah: and he had prepared for him a great chamber, 5

he is here called 'the priest,' and in *v.* 28, 'the high-priest,' constitutes a certain objection against the identification. On the other hand the incident which here connects 'Eliashib the priest' with Tobiah is of so similar a character to that which associates 'Eliashib the high-priest' in alliance with Sanballat (*v.* 28), that it is most natural to suppose the same person is denoted.

The full title is not, as some fancifully suggest, withheld out of respect for the office which was so degraded. It is more probable that Nehemiah is recording the fact that 'the priest who was appointed over the chambers of the house of God' happened in this instance to be the high-priest himself: perhaps having been appointed to this duty before his succession to the high-priestly office, he still retained the charge. Again, it may be remembered that in old times 'the priest' was the customary title of the high-priest.

If the same as the high-priest, it has been remarked that his name does not appear in chap. x. among those that signed the covenant. It is however somewhat hazardous to conclude, as commentators have generally done, that he must therefore have refused his signature and have openly opposed the policy of Nehemiah. The names in chap. x. are most of them the names of houses, and the high-priest's name is probably represented in the mention of 'Seraiah.'

having the oversight of] R.V. **who was appointed over.**

the chamber] R.V. **the chambers.** Marg. 'Heb. *the chamber*'. The singular does not give the right meaning. Eliashib in order to dispose of 'a great chamber' to Tobiah, must have had all the Temple chambers under his charge. The proposal to read the plural 'chambers' (*lishkôth*) instead of the singular 'chamber' (*lishkath*) is probably right. See ver. 9.

The versions give quite an erroneous turn to the passage; LXX. *οἰκῶν ἐν γαζοφυλακίῳ*, Vulg. 'præpositus in gazophylacio.'

was *allied*] R.V. **being allied.** A relationship by marriage is intended by this expression, which is the same as that rendered in Ruth ii. 20, 'The man is *nigh of kin* to us.'

In the LXX. *ἐγγίων* and Vulg. 'proximus,' the idea of local vicinity misapprehends the original. We are not told the exact relationship of Tobiah to Eliashib. But in vi. 17, it appears that he had married a daughter of Shecaniah; and that his son Jehohanan had married a daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah. Both Shecaniah and Meshullam are names mentioned in iii. 29, 30; and the probability is that they were priests of high rank. It is natural to derive Tobiah's alliance to Eliashib from his connexion with one or both of these families.

5. *and he had prepared*] R.V. **had prepared.** Literally, 'had made.' It is possible that we are to understand by this expression that Eliashib had made a large chamber for Tobiah by knocking together two or three smaller ones. But it is better to understand by it 'had fitted up' or 'furnished.'

where aforetime they laid the meat offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine, and the oil, which was commanded *to be given* to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters; and the offerings
6 of the priests. But in all this *time* was not I at Jerusalem: for in the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon came I unto the king, and after certain days

chamber] One of the rooms on the side of the Temple **or in** the buildings connected with the Temple. The suggestion that Tobiah was a Jew and that the high-priest's action may have technically been defensible does not agree with the general impression to be gathered from Nehemiah's narrative, cf. ii. 10.

the meat offerings] R.V. **the meal offerings.** For the law **of** the meal offering, cf. Lev. ii. 6.

the frankincense] For the use of frankincense in offerings, cf. Ex. xxx. 34; Lev. ii. 1, 15; vi. 15; xxiv. 7; 1 Chron. ix. 29.

the vessels] Probably the various instruments for measuring the quantities contributed and for conveying them to the altar, cf. x. 39.

the tithes] The tithe here referred to is of the produce of the field, cf. x. 37.

the new wine] R.V. **the wine.**

which was commanded to be given] R.V. **which were given by commandment.** Literally, 'the commandment of,' i.e. 'the statutable right of,' 'the due of,' cf. Deut. xviii. 3.

Levites...singers...porters]

and the offerings of the priests] R.V. **and the heave offerings for the priests.** These were the priests' tithe of the Levites' tithe as mentioned in x. 39, 40, xii. 47.

6. *was not I*] R.V. **I was not.**

the two and thirtieth year of Artaxerxes] **i.e.** B.C. 433, twelve years since his appointment to be governor of Judea (ii. 6).

king of Babylon] For this title applied to Artaxerxes king of Persia, cf. Ezra vi. 22, 'the king of Assyria.' Babylon being by far the largest and most important city in the western portion of the Persian dominion, the expression was a natural one in the lips of a Jew. It hardly affords sufficient foundation for the assumption that king Artaxerxes happened to be residing at Babylon at the time of Nehemiah's application for leave of absence.

came I] R.V. **I went.** We are left to suppose that Nehemiah had some time previously returned from Jerusalem to his post at Susa. That his governorship of Judea was only for a limited period is plainly hinted at by the king's question in ii. 6, 'And when wilt thou return?' How long it lasted we are not told with any definiteness. From v. 14 we may assume that he was governor for the greater part of 12 years.

after certain days] Literally, 'at the end of days.' A general expression, denoting a considerable interval. To restrict its meaning to 'a year' on the strength of certain passages (e.g. Ex. xiii. 10; Lev.

obtained I *leave* of the king: and I came to Jerusalem, and 7
understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in
preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God.
And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the house- 8
hold stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber. Then I com- 9
manded, and they cleansed the chambers: and thither
brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the
meat offering and the frankincense.

And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not 10

xxv. 29; Num. ix. 22; Jud. xvii. 10) gives a very improbable explanation of the phrase, which is often used of a much more considerable period, e.g. 'in process of time' Gen. iv. 3, 'after a while' 1 Kings xvii. 7.

obtained I leave] R.V. **I asked leave.** Perhaps in consequence of disquieting information which had reached him.

7. *understood of the evil*] i.e. 'gave attention to,' 'perceived its significance.' 'The evil' inflicted by the pernicious example of the high-priest lay in the disregard of all the measures recently taken to separate the people from 'the heathen nations.'

did] R.V. **had done,** i.e. not so much by continual alliance, but by this notorious instance, combining sacrilege towards the Temple and complaisance towards the idolater.

8. *it grieved me sore*] Cf. ii. 10, 'it grieved them exceedingly.'

all the household stuff] Literally, 'all the vessels of the house.' 'Stuff'=the furniture, an old English word. For 'stuff' in this sense cf. Gen. xxxi. 37, xlv. 20; 1 Sam. x. 22. Aldis Wright (*Bible Word-Book*, ed. 1, p. 463) cites, in illustration of this word, Hall (*Hen. IV.* fol. 26 b), 'Sir Thomas Rampston knight the kynges vice-chamberlain with all his chamber *stuffe*, And apparell;' and Shakespeare (*Com. of Errors* IV. 4), 'Therefore away to get our *stuffe* aboard.'

9. *they cleansed the chambers*] 'they,' impersonal. 'The chambers,' more than one had been desecrated for the purpose of supplying Tobiah with 'a great chamber.'

the vessels...meat (R.V. **meal-**) *offering...frankincense*] Perhaps the typical items only are mentioned. But a comparison with the list, *v.* 5, suggests the possibility that the withholding of the tithe from the Levites, which called for the fresh regulations in *vv.* 10—14, will account for the omission of the Levitical and priestly portions in this list.

10—14. The failure of the people to furnish the due supplies to the Levites; and Nehemiah's reform.

10. *the portions of the Levites*] The portion which the people had covenanted to contribute to the Levites (cf. x. 37, ff.) had not been paid. The Levites to escape starvation had dispersed into the country. The Temple services were therefore crippled. Compare the similar rebuke in Mal. iii. 7—12. 'The Levites' here used for the whole class.

been given *them:* for the Levites and the singers, that did
11 the work, were fled every one to his field. Then contended
I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God for-
saken? And I gathered them together, and set them in
12 their place. Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn
13 and the new wine and the oil unto the treasuries. And I
made treasurers over the treasuries, Shelemiah the priest,
and Zadok the scribe, and of the Levites, Pedaiah: and

for] R.V. so that. Their dispersion was the result, not the occasion of non-payment.

the singers] Under this head, the porters (*v.* 5) would be included.

every one to his field] For mention of the country villages 'round about Jerusalem,' to which 'the Levites and the singers' resorted, cf. xii. 27—29.

11. *contended I*] Cf. verses 17—25, v. 7.

the rulers] R.V. marg. 'Or, *deputies*'.

forsaken] Neglected by the Jews and deserted by the Levites.

I gathered them together] Nehemiah caused a muster of the Levites.

in their place] i.e. in their proper positions. See notes viii. 7, ix. 3. LXX. ἐπὶ στάσει αὐτῶν. Vulg. 'in stationibus suis.'

12. *Then brought all Judah*] Nehemiah's expostulation produced an immediate result. For the expression 'all Judah'='the whole nation,' cf. xii. 34—44.

the tithe...corn...new wine (R.V. wine)...*oil*] This is the tithe spoken of in ver. 5 and in x. 37, the contribution of which was described in xii. 44—47.

unto the treasuries] The same word in the Hebrew as that rendered 'treasures' in xii. 44; and it might here be rendered 'for (or, as) treasures,' i.e. to be stored. But the sense in the English version is preferable, so also LXX. εἰς τοὺς θησαυρούς, Vulg. 'in horrea:' and it occurs with the same meaning in Mal. iii. 10, which aptly illustrates the present passage.

13. *Shelemiah the priest and Zadok the scribe*] It is natural to conjecture from the fact that these names are followed by 'and of the Levites,' that Shelemiah and Zadok were priests, and that the treasurers consisted of two priests and two Levites.

'Shelemiah the priest' is perhaps the same as the Shelemiah of iii. 30; and if so, 'Zadok the scribe' may be identified with 'Zadok the son of Immer' whose name occurs in iii. 29, and who was undoubtedly of priestly descent (cf. Immer, vii. 40). The title of 'scribe' given to him and Ezra, though both of priestly origin, shows that the work of 'the scribe' was obtaining increasing importance. Whether it implies that Ezra was dead and that Zadok had succeeded to his office, is an interesting question, but one which we have no means of deciding.

Pedaiah] Possibly the same who is mentioned in viii. 4.

next to them *was* Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah: for they were counted faithful, and their office *was* to distribute unto their brethren. Remember me, O 14
my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds

next to them] Literally 'upon their hand,' i.e. attending and assisting, cf. xi. 24, 'at the king's hand.

Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah] We have had mention of Mattaniah as a Levitical house representing the sons of Asaph (xi. 17, xii. 8, 25—35).

We may conjecture that Shelemiah represented the Temple priests, Zadok the 'judicial' section of the priests; Pedaiah the Levites proper, and Hanan the singers and porters.

their office was] R.V. **their duty was.** The construction is the same as in Ezr. x. 12, but proved too difficult for the versions. The LXX. combines the two clauses, ὅτι πίστοι ἐλογίσθησαν ἐπ' αὐτοὺς μερίζειν τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς αὐτῶν, Vulg. 'et ipsis creditae sunt partes patrum suorum.'

to distribute unto their brethren] i.e. to distribute fairly among the various houses, and to decide upon the Levites' tenth paid to the priests.

14. *Remember me*] For this ejaculation see note on v. 19, and cf. *vv.* 22, 31; Ps. cvi. 4.

wipe not out my good deeds] R.V. marg. 'Heb. *kindnesses*'. The actual phrase is not found elsewhere in the O.T. The metaphor, which is that of sponging off from the leathern roll of record, is familiar to us from Exod. xvii. 14, xxxii. 32, 33.

my good deeds] Literally, 'my mercies or kindnesses' (LXX. ἔλεος, Vulg. 'miserationes'). At first sight the word seems scarcely appropriate. Does it signify Nehemiah's acts of kindness on behalf of the Levites? or his acts of love and reverence, 'good deeds,' towards his God? The word in the Hebrew '*khesed*' is the one commonly used of God's mercy towards mankind and of the loving-kindness of man towards man. It occurs however also, though more rarely, of man's love responding to the Divine mercy. In this sense probably it is found, as here, in the plural in 2 Chron. xxxii. 32 'the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his good deeds,' xxxv. 26 'the rest of the acts of Josiah and his good deeds.' These 'good deeds' (the plur. of '*khesed*') are clearly the efforts of these two kings to live in more thorough compliance with the ceremonial of the Law. We may remember too that the 'pious' Israelite was the 'khasîd,' and in the 2nd cent. B.C. 'Asideans' (*khasidim*) was the name given to the most fanatical of the forerunners of the Pharisees.

It is not likely that Hosea's use of the word in the singular (vi. 4 'your goodness is as a morning cloud,' 6 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice') throws any light upon its usage in the present verse beyond showing that it was *possibly* applied in his time to man's attitude towards God; but this interpretation is very doubtful. The Rabbinical teaching on the subject of *khasadim* made 'the bestowal of kindness' equivalent to 'man's duty to his neighbour.' Compare the saying of Simon the

that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof.

15 In those days saw I in Judah *some* treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all *manner of* burdens, which they brought *into* Jerusalem on the sabbath day: and I testified *against them* in the day wherein they sold
16 victuals. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which

Just quoted in the note on x. 37, and see Taylor's note in *Sayings of the Jewish Fathers*, pp. 26, 27.

the house of my God] See on ii. 8, 12. As compared with 'the house of our God' in ver. 4, the phrase is appropriate to the writer's change from narrative to soliloquy.

the offices] R.V. **the observances.** The word means literally 'that which is or is to be kept,' cf. ver. 30 and xii. 9, 24 (= 'ward'). Its meaning here is probably quite general, denoting 'observances,' 'customs,' and 'usages,' and not any particular functions as Vulg. 'cærimoniis.' LXX. omit.

15—22. Nehemiah's vindication of the Sabbath.

15. Jewish Labour on the Sabbath.

saw I in Judah] i.e. while Nehemiah was residing in the country.

treading wine presses] For the phrase cf. Is. lxiii. 2; Lam. i. 15.

The word here used for 'winepress' (*gath*) is different from that used e.g. in Isai. v. 2; Joel ii. 24, iii. 13 (*yeqeb*). The 'winepress' or *gath* is the place in which the grapes are trodden; the 'winefat' or *yeqeb* is the receptacle into which the juice is made to flow from the winepress.

sheaves] R.V. marg. 'Or, *heaps of corn*'. The time of treading the grapes would be later than that of carrying the corn. Perhaps the corn was being brought in on asses from the country to be threshed in the city: or sheaves of straw are intended.

lading asses] R.V. adds **therewith.**

on the sabbath day] The observance of the Sabbath was always the stumbling-block in the way of free relations between the pious Jew and the Gentile. The temptation to desecrate the Sabbath in order to maintain amicable relations with Gentile traders was a constant source of religious degeneracy among the Jews. Hence the strictness with which its observance was inculcated during the Exile, Isai. lvi. 2, lviii. 13; Jer. xvii. 21; Ezek. xx. 16, xxii. 26.

in the day wherein they sold victuals] It appears that the wares having been brought into the city on the Sabbath, Nehemiah raised his protest on the next or some following day, when they were being sold.

It can hardly mean that they were sold on the Sabbath; for in that case Nehemiah would have laid the chief emphasis on a Sabbath traffic, as in the next verse, rather than on the act of conveyance.

16. Traffic on the Sabbath.

therein] i.e. in the city.

brought fish, and all *manner of* ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem.
17 Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing *is* this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day?
18 Did not your fathers thus, and *did not* our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath.
19 And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and *some* of my servants

which brought fish] R.V. **which brought in fish.** These would be the salted and dried fish from the Mediterranean, cf. iii. 3.

ware] i.e. anything offered for sale.

sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah] The fault lay with the buyers, as is shown in the next verse.

and in Jerusalem] The words are added emphatically, as if Nehemiah had said 'to think of such a thing being possible in the holy city.'

17. *Then I contended*] cf. ver. 11.

the nobles of Judah] A different word (*ḥorim*) from that used for the rulers in ver. 11.

18. *did not your fathers thus*] Cf. Jer. xvii. 22, 23, 27, 'but hallow ye the sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers; but they hearkened not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, and might not receive instruction.... But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden and enter in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.'

our God] Note the change from '*your* fathers' to '*our* God' and 'upon *us*.'

all this evil] i.e. subjection to a foreign power.

ye bring more wrath upon Israel] Cf. Ezra x. 10, 'have married strange women, to increase the guilt of Israel.'

19. *the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark*] The rare word for 'began to be dark' gives rise to the renderings LXX. ἠνίκα κατέστησαν πύλαι, Vulg. 'cum quievissent portæ.' Another suggested rendering is 'had their bells rung,' is very ludicrous, deriving the word from the same root as the word for 'cymbals.'

before the sabbath] From this we should gather that the Sabbath began as soon as it was dark; not absolutely at sunset, but at the termination of the brief twilight.

gates] R.V. **doors.**

charged] R.V. **commanded.** Same word as in the previous clause.

servants] Literally 'youths,' παῖδες, i.e. personal attendants, cf. iv. 10.

set I at the gates, *that* there should no burden be brought
20 in on the sabbath day. So the merchants and sellers of all
kind of ware lodged without Jerusalem once or twice.
21 Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why
lodge ye about the wall? if ye do *so* again, I will lay hands
on you. From that time forth came they no *more* on the
22 sabbath. And I commanded the Levites that they should
cleanse themselves, and *that* they should come *and* keep
the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day. Remember me, O

at the gates] R.V. **over the gates**, i.e. to superintend the watch.

that *there should no burden*, &c.] The object of the watch was not to bar the free passage in and out, but only to prevent the introduction of merchandise on that day.

20. *So the merchants*, &c.] The device only partially succeeded; and various merchants, who had been compelled for 24 hours to remain without the walls, seem to have carried on their trade with such of the inhabitants as came outside to deal with them. We gather from the verse that the chief market was held on the first day of the week.

lodged] i.e. passed the night, as in Gen. xix. 2, xxiv. 25.

21. *Why lodge ye about the wall?*] R.V. marg. 'Heb. *before*', LXX. ἀπέναντι, Vulg. 'ex adverso.' Nehemiah, in his capacity of governor, was able to put his foot down upon this evasion of his law. He threatened the traders that, if they hung about on the outskirts of the walls on the Sabbath, he would treat them as public enemies.

22. *And I commanded the Levites*] The verse contains an additional precaution taken by Nehemiah to secure the observance of the Sabbath. Its exact character however is somewhat obscure.

Nehemiah delivers to the Levites a special commission to take over the watch of the city gates on the Sabbaths. For this purpose they are to cleanse themselves; the duty was a sacred one, since upon it depended the nation's fidelity to the Sabbath. We are not told whether these Levites were appointed to serve in addition to, or as substitutes for, the regular watchmen; or whether they were intended to continue the duties temporarily entrusted by Nehemiah to his servants (*ver.* 19).

come and *keep the gates*] The copula is wanting in the Hebrew; and thus has given occasion to a proposal for the rendering, 'And that they should come to the keepers of the gates' &c. i.e. that the Levites should on the Sabbath eve go the rounds to the various gates for the purpose of solemnly announcing the advent of the holy day. Even if the grammatical construction, which this translation supposes, be admissible, the sense does not carry with it the ring of probability.

The versions supply the copula. LXX. εἶπα τοῖς Λευίταις οἳ ἦσαν καθαριζόμενοι καὶ ἐρχόμενοι φυλάσσοντες τὰς πύλας ἁγιάζειν τὴν ἡμέραν. Vulg. 'ut mundarentur et venirent ad custodiendas portas.'

Remember me...concerning *this also*] R.V. **Remember unto me...this also.** Cf. ver. 15.

my God, *concerning* this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy.

In those days also saw I Jews *that* had married wives of 23
Ashdod, of Ammon, *and* of Moab: and their children spake 24
half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people. And I contended with them, and cursed them, 25
and smote certain of them, and pluckt off their hair, and

23—29. Nehemiah's protest against mixed marriages, cf. ix. 2, x. 28, 30; Ezr. ix. 1 ff., x. 1 ff.

23. *saw I Jews*] R.V. **saw I the Jews.** The article which the R.V. rightly renders shows that Nehemiah is not making a general charge against the Jewish nation, but reports what he had seen in the instance of a certain set of Jews. It has been suggested that Nehemiah came across them in the course of a journey (cf. *v.* 15) through the southern districts of the Judean territory.

that *had married wives* (R.V. **women**)] R.V. marg. 'Heb. *had made to dwell* with them'. LXX. οἳ ἐκάθισαν γυναῖκας. Cf. Ezra x. 2, 10, 14, 17, 18.

24. *spake half in the speech of Ashdod*] LXX. οἱ υἱοὶ αὐτῶν ἥμισυ λαλοῦσιν Ἀζωτιστί. Vulg. 'filii eorum ex media parte loquebantur Azotice,' half their words were framed in the dialect of Philistia. This dialect would be very similar to Hebrew, but from accent and the use of peculiar words almost unintelligible to the Jews.

On the relations of the Jews with Ashdod, see on iv. 7, and compare Zech. ix. 6.

in the Jews' language] i.e. Hebrew ('Yehudîth') LXX. Ἰουδαϊστί. Vulg. 'Judaice' as in 2 Kings xviii. 26, 28; Is. xxxvi. 11, 13; 2 Chron. xxxii. 18. The language of Hezekiah's reign was still spoken by the Jews after the Return, as indeed would be abundantly shown by these memorials of Ezra and Nehemiah and by the writings of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

On the mistaken idea that during the Captivity the Jews had exchanged Hebrew for Chaldee, i.e. Aramaic, see Introd. § 8.

but according to the language of each people] Referring to the Ammonites and Moabites, who represented dialectical varieties.

25. *I contended*] Cf. *vv.* 11, 17.

cursed] R.V. marg. 'Or, *reviled*'. For the word 'to curse' (qalal) cf. *v.* 2; Mal. iii. 9, iv. 6.

smote...pluckt off their hair] Nehemiah's frantic excitement against these countrymen was accompanied with gestures and blows such as may be witnessed in Syria but are almost incredible to our western ideas.

pluckt off their hair] LXX. ἐμαδάρωσα αὐτούς. Vulg. 'decalvavi eos.' Commentators suggest that this was done at Nehemiah's command, and not by his own hand; further that it was a judicial sentence of 'depilatio.' But the context quite supports the idea that he per-

made them swear by God, *saying*, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto
26 your sons, or for yourselves. Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these *things?* yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: *nevertheless* even him
27 did outlandish women cause to sin. Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our

sonally ill-treated them; so frantic was his indignation. He did not intend, as some suggest, by pulling out their hair to compel them to assume the appearance of penitents. For the action of pulling out the hair cf. Ezr. ix. 3.

made them swear by God, saying] i.e. he made them swear an oath in God's name, the words of the oath being given in the clause following.

This is better than the alternative rendering, 'I adjured them by God' (cf. 1 Kings xviii. 10; Cant. ii. 7).

Ye shall not] The oath which Nehemiah administered in the 2nd plur. was repeated by the Jews in the first pers.

unto your sons] R.V. **for your sons.**

26. *Solomon king of Israel*] An argument from the greater to the less. If Solomon, the beloved of God, fell through this snare, how much more likely to sin were these ignorant Jews?

by these things] i.e. on account of wives taken from idolatrous people.

among many nations] Cf. Mich. iv. 3, 'he shall judge between many peoples.'

was there no king like him] Cf. 1 Kings iii. 12, 13; 2 Chron. i. 12.

who (R.V. **and he**) *was beloved of his God*] Perhaps referring especially to the privilege of Solomon to receive the task of building the Temple and ordering the sacred worship; but the expression calls to mind 2 Sam. xii. 25, 'And the LORD loved him;...and he called his name Jedidiah for the LORD's sake.'

outlandish women] R.V. **strange women.** See 1 Kings xi. 3 ff.

27. *Shall we then hearken unto you*] The rendering is disputed.

According to the English Version, the sense is, 'are we to listen to your expostulations and entreaties, and permit this evil to go on unchecked, when even the saintly Solomon fell because of it?' This is the rendering of the LXX. καὶ ὑμῶν μὴ ἀκουσώμεθα, and is reproduced by the Vulg. 'Numquid et nos inobedientes faciemus.' The alternative translation throws greater emphasis on the contrast between Solomon and the Jews. 'And as for you, should it be heard of (i.e. surely if Solomon thus fell, it should be an unheard of thing), that ye should go on the same fatal course of conduct?' In favour of this rendering is the prominent position of the 2nd plur. pron. at the head of *v.* 27.

transgress] R.V. **trespass.**

God in marrying strange wives? And *one* of the sons of 28
Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest, *was* son in law
to Sanballat the Horonite: therefore I chased him from
me. Remember them, O my God, because they have 29
defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood,

wives] R.V. **women.** Nehemiah apparently renewed the policy of Ezra (Ezr. x.) and urged the Jews to put away from them their Gentile wives.

28. one *of the sons of Joiada*] We should gather that Eliashib the grandfather was still alive, since the emphasis lies on the relationship of the offender to the high-priest. 'Joiada.' Cf. xii. 10. On Eliashib see note on ver. 4.

son in law to Sanballat the Horonite] For Sanballat, cf. ii. 10, iii. 33, iv. 1, vi. 1. The marriage of the high-priest's grandson with Sanballat's daughter was an offence in every way. (1) It showed treasonable alliance with Israel's bitterest foe, (2) it violated the rule laid down in Ezra's time against mixed marriages, (3) it compromised the purity of the high-priestly house (Lev. xxi. 6 ff.).

therefore I chased him from me] LXX. ἐξέβρασα. Obviously because he was contumacious, and refused to put away his wife. Rashi's explanation that Nehemiah chased him away for fear of his playing the spy and reporting the means of entering and leaving the city, is strangely inadequate. Josephus relates a story so similar to this that it should probably be referred to the same events, although he must have obtained it from some other source. According to Josephus (*Ant.* xi. 7. 8) a certain Manasse, the brother of Jaddua and son of John or Johanan (and therefore grandson not son of Joiada) took to wife Nikaso, the daughter of the Cuthaean Sanballat. Refusing to put her away, he was expelled from Jerusalem by the Jewish nobles, and took refuge with the Samaritans, among whom, as a member of the high-priestly family, he set up upon Mt Gerizim a rival temple and priesthood. It will be seen that Josephus assigns this to the period of Alexander the Great. But there it is probable that Josephus is at fault; for he completely fails to realize the interval of time between the Return from the Exile and the Age of Alexander; and it is to this chronological confusion rather than to a mistake of 'Jaddua' for 'Joiada' that we should ascribe the cause of his principal variation from the Memoirs of Nehemiah. For (1) in Alexander's time the organization of the Samaritan worship had long been fully established, (2) it is very improbable that a repetition of such a striking incident should occur just a century after Nehemiah's time.

29. *Remember them*] Here in a bad sense.

because they have defiled] R.V. marg. 'Heb. *for the defilings of*'. The word so rendered occurs only here. It is from the same root as the word 'Goel,' which explains the confusion of the LXX. ἐπὶ ἀγχιστείᾳ τῆς ἱερατείας.

the priesthood...the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites] Joiada's son, not being high-priest, did not himself fall under the marriage law of the high-priest, Lev. xxi. 13—15. But as a possible successor

30 and of the Levites. Thus cleansed I them from all strangers, and appointed the wards of the priests and the
31 Levites, every one in his business; and for the wood offering, at times appointed, and for the firstfruits. Remember me, O my God, for good.

to the office, his marriage with Sanballat's daughter violated the spirit of the Law. 'The covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites' seems to mean the peculiar relation of the priests and the Levites as holy, set apart for the special service of God, and as representatives of the whole people. It is possible that Nehemiah's words relate not to the offence of an individual, but to the shame accruing to the whole priesthood in the fact that renegade priests had founded a rival Jehovah worship on Mt Gerizim, among the hated Samaritans. The expression is very similar to that in Mal. ii. 8, 'But ye are turned aside out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble in the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts.' For 'the covenant of the priesthood,' cf. Deut. xxxiii. 8—11. Mal. ii. 1—8 will form an excellent commentary upon Nehemiah's earnest denunciation.

30. NEHEMIAH SUMMARIZES HIS WORK UNDER THE HEADS OF PURIFICATION AND ORGANIZATION.

cleansed I them] i.e. the people of Israel.

all strangers] R.V. marg. 'Or, *every strange thing*'. LXX. *ἀπὸ πάσης ἀλλοτριώσεως*; the foreign element, which threatened to encroach upon the separateness of Israel and become the renewed source of idolatry. Vulg. 'ab omnibus alienigenis.'

the wards of] R.V. **wards for.** Nehemiah did not originate the duties of the priests and Levites; he only set on foot a more systematic distribution of their work. The word 'wards' may here indicate the successive relays or 'watches' of priests and Levites (LXX. *ἐφημερίας*. Vulg. 'ordines'); or, in a more general sense, their 'duties' and 'observances,' as in ver. 13, which seems to agree best with the following clause: 'each one in his work.'

in his business] R.V. **in his work**, ver. 10, x. 33, xi. 12. As generally in these books, except xi. 16, 22, where 'business' is retained. Cf. Prov. xxii. 29, 'Seest thou a man diligent in his business?'

31. *and for the wood offering*] Cf. x. 35.

the firstfruits] Cf. x. 36—40.

The special mention of these practical measures of reorganization perhaps implies that they remedied two principal causes of discontent and points most liable to abuse from negligence.

Remember me, O my God, for good] Cf. 14, 22. v. 19.

Additional Note on xiii. 6. Prof. Kirkpatrick suggests that Nehemiah's first Mission lasted 'perhaps for not more than a year,' and that he then returned to Susa. The words 'I went to the king' he explains of Nehemiah's going to serve his turn as cupbearer; and 'at the end of certain days' he would refer to the close of his term of office. This explanation has the merit of allowing an interval of 12 years between Nehemiah's two visits to Jerusalem. The objection arising from the date in v. 14 he meets by the conjecture that the Compiler has inserted it from a misunderstanding of ch. xiii. 6, or 'that Nehemiah continued to be nominal governor...though not resident in Judæa.' ('Doctrine of the Prophets,' London, 1892, pp. 508, 509.)

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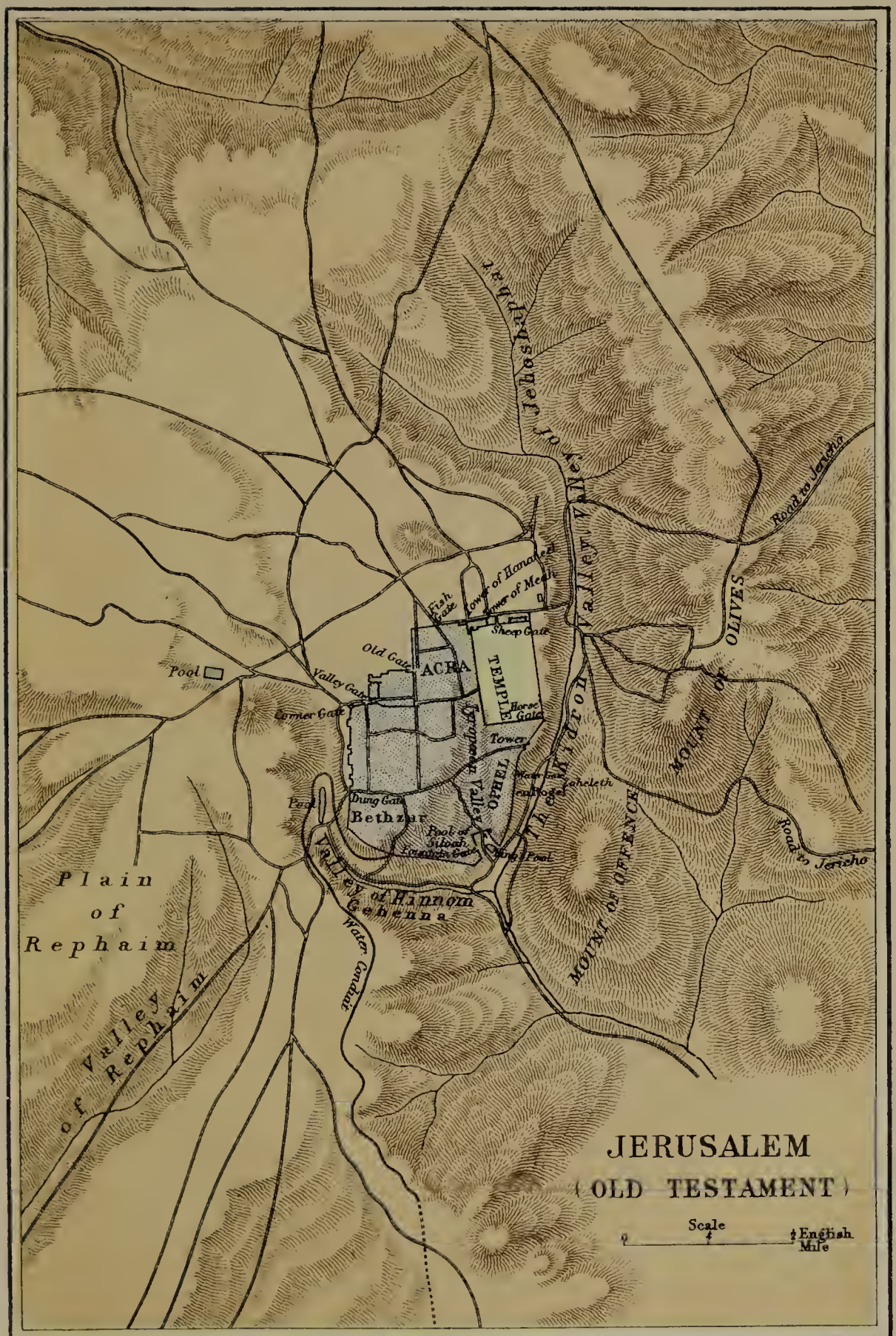

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